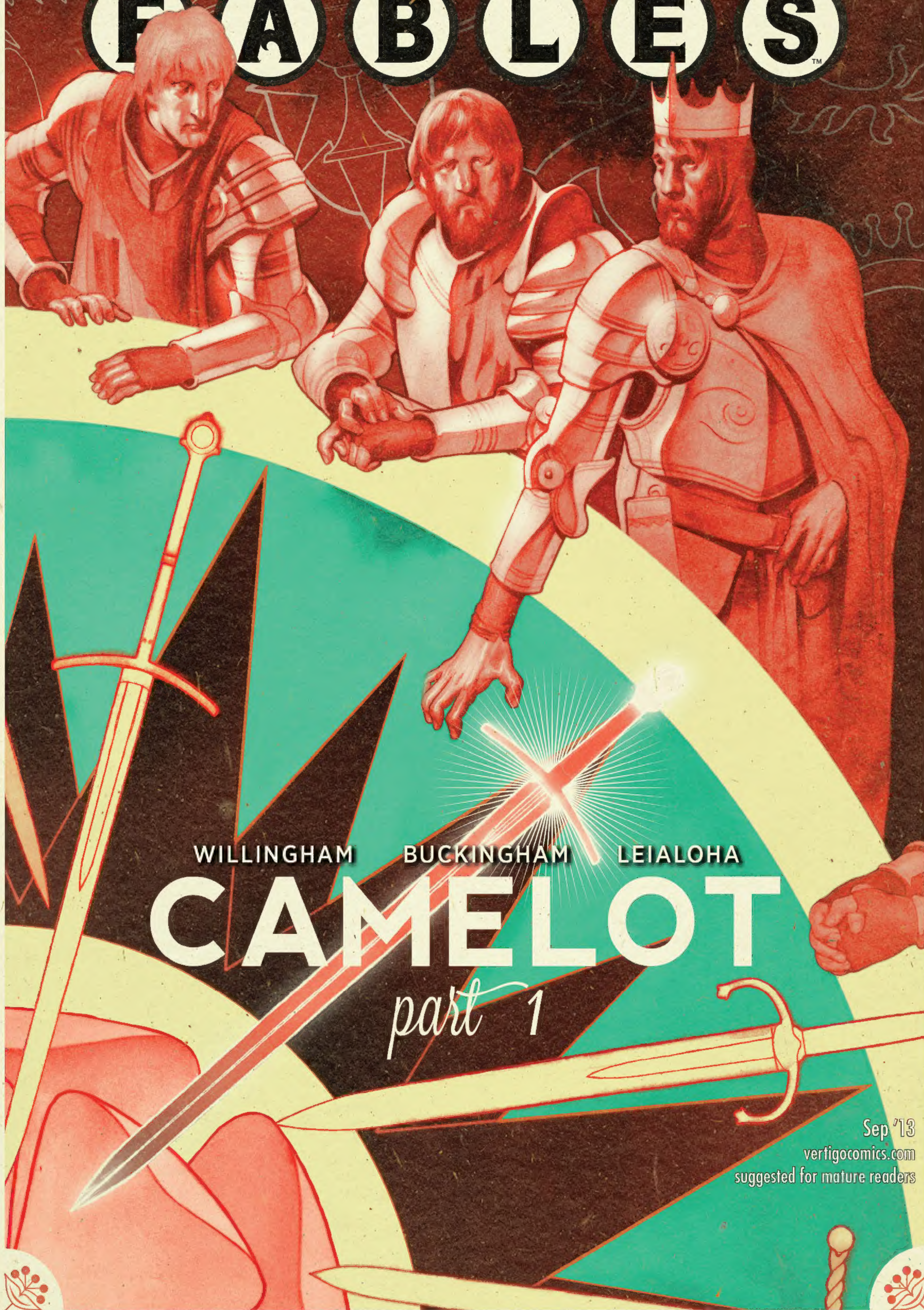


VERTIGO

131

F A B L E S



WILLINGHAM BUCKINGHAM LEIALOHA

CAMELOT

part 1

Sep '13

vertigo.com

suggested for mature readers



FABLETOWN.

IT'S SIMPLE,  
BUT THAT'S NOT AT  
ALL THE SAME AS  
BEING EASY.



# A Heart Remote and Unyielding

↔ Part One of ↔

# Camelot

**Bill  
Willingham**  
writer/creator

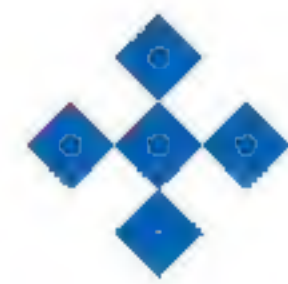
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Buckingham**  
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**Steve Leialoha**  
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**Lee Loughridge**  
colors

**Todd  
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letters



**João  
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**Gregory Lockard**  
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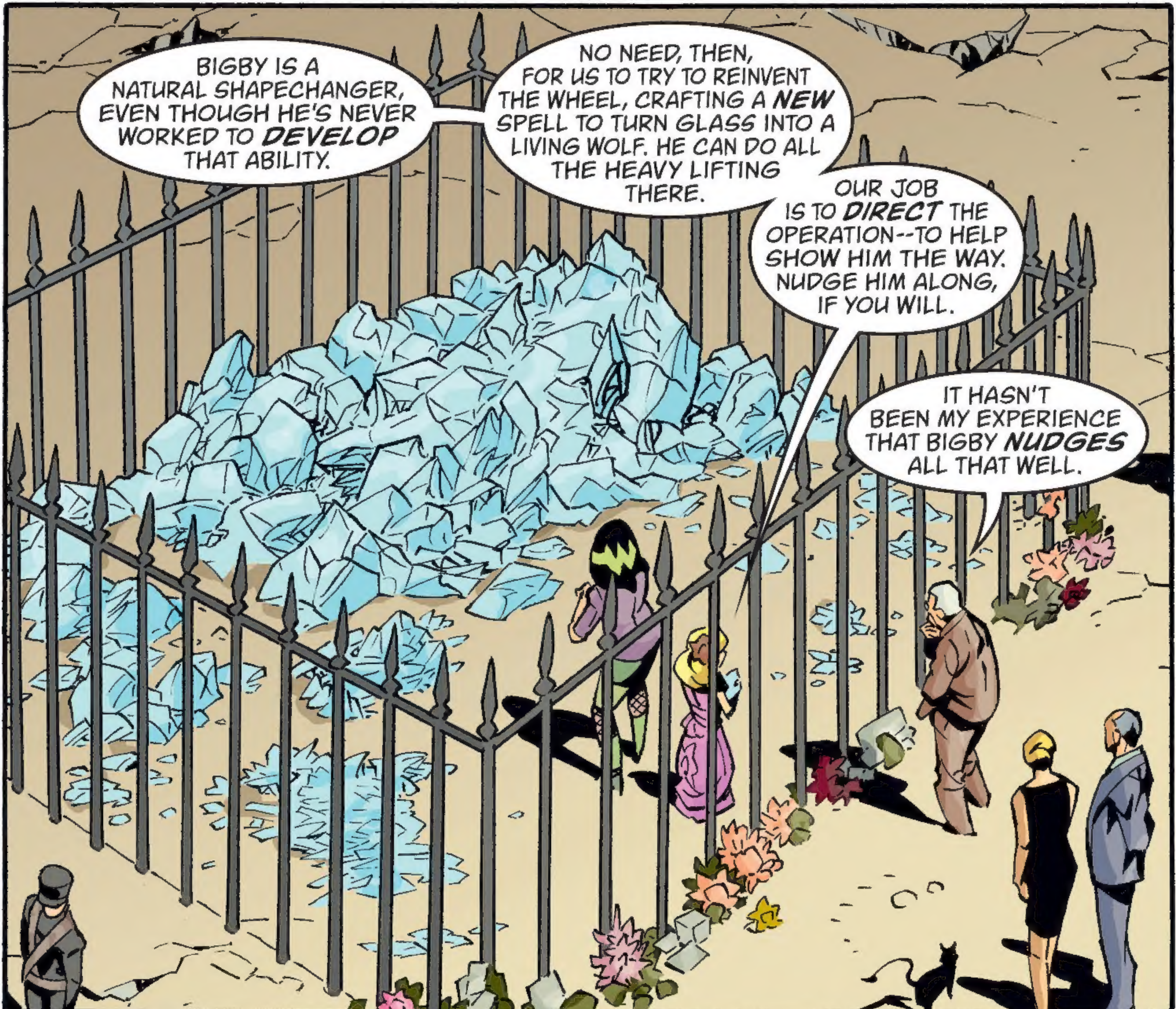
**Shelly Bond**  
editor

BIGBY IS A  
NATURAL SHAPECHANGER,  
EVEN THOUGH HE'S NEVER  
WORKED TO *DEVELOP*  
THAT ABILITY.

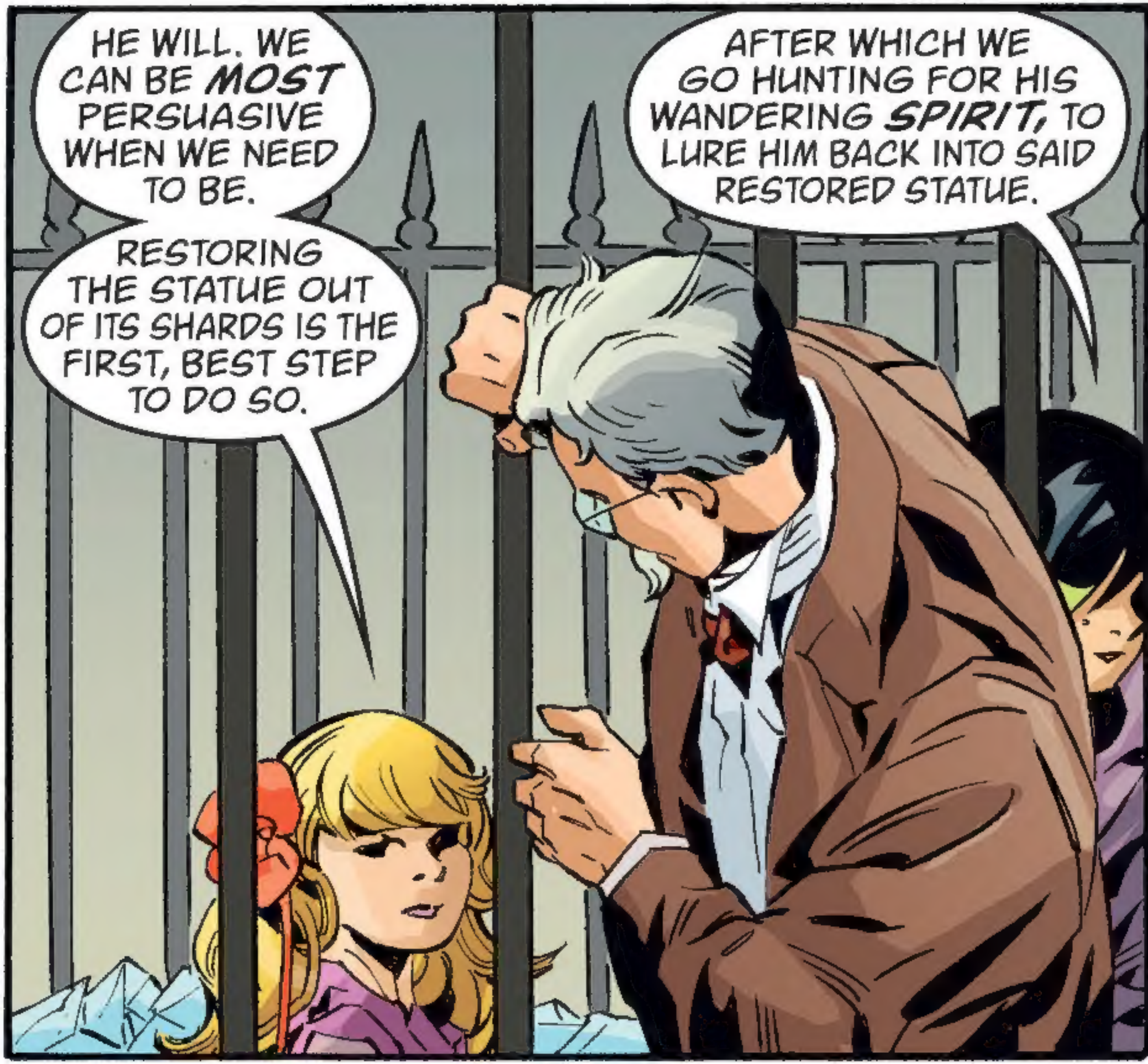
NO NEED, THEN,  
FOR US TO TRY TO REINVENT  
THE WHEEL, CRAFTING A *NEW*  
SPELL TO TURN GLASS INTO A  
LIVING WOLF. HE CAN DO ALL  
THE HEAVY LIFTING  
THERE.

OUR JOB  
IS TO *DIRECT* THE  
OPERATION--TO HELP  
SHOW HIM THE WAY.  
NUDGE HIM ALONG,  
IF YOU WILL.

IT HASN'T  
BEEN MY EXPERIENCE  
THAT BIGBY *NUDGES*  
ALL THAT WELL.







HE WILL. WE CAN BE **MOST** PERSUASIVE WHEN WE NEED TO BE.

RESTORING THE STATUE OUT OF ITS SHARDS IS THE FIRST, BEST STEP TO DO SO.

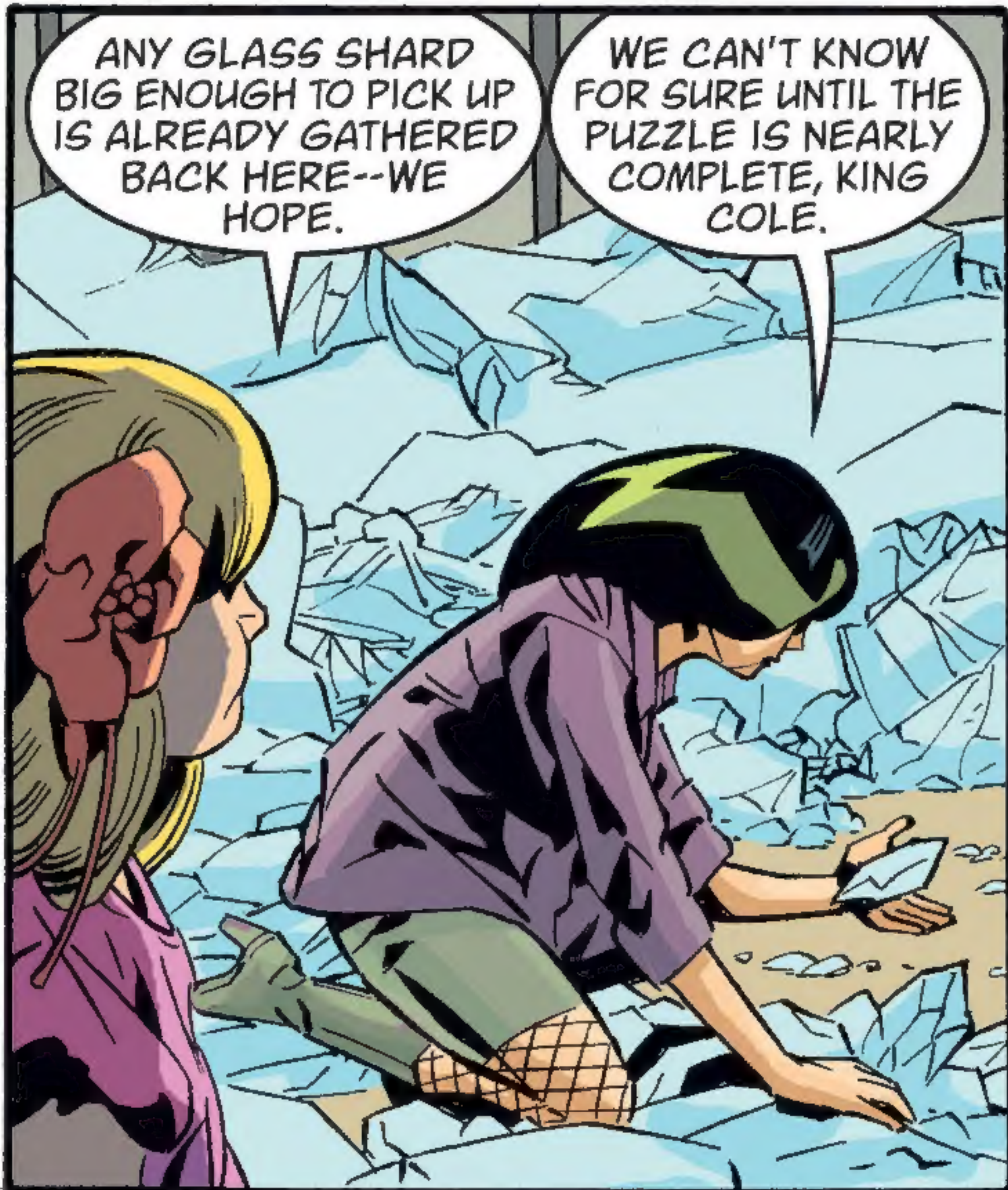
AFTER WHICH WE GO HUNTING FOR HIS WANDERING **SPIRIT**, TO LURE HIM BACK INTO SAID RESTORED STATUE.



YES, THEY'RE TWO BIG TASKS. **HUGE**, IN FACT.

BUT STILL SIMPLE.

AND WHAT CAN **WE** DO TO HELP?



ANY GLASS SHARD BIG ENOUGH TO PICK UP IS ALREADY GATHERED BACK HERE--WE HOPE.

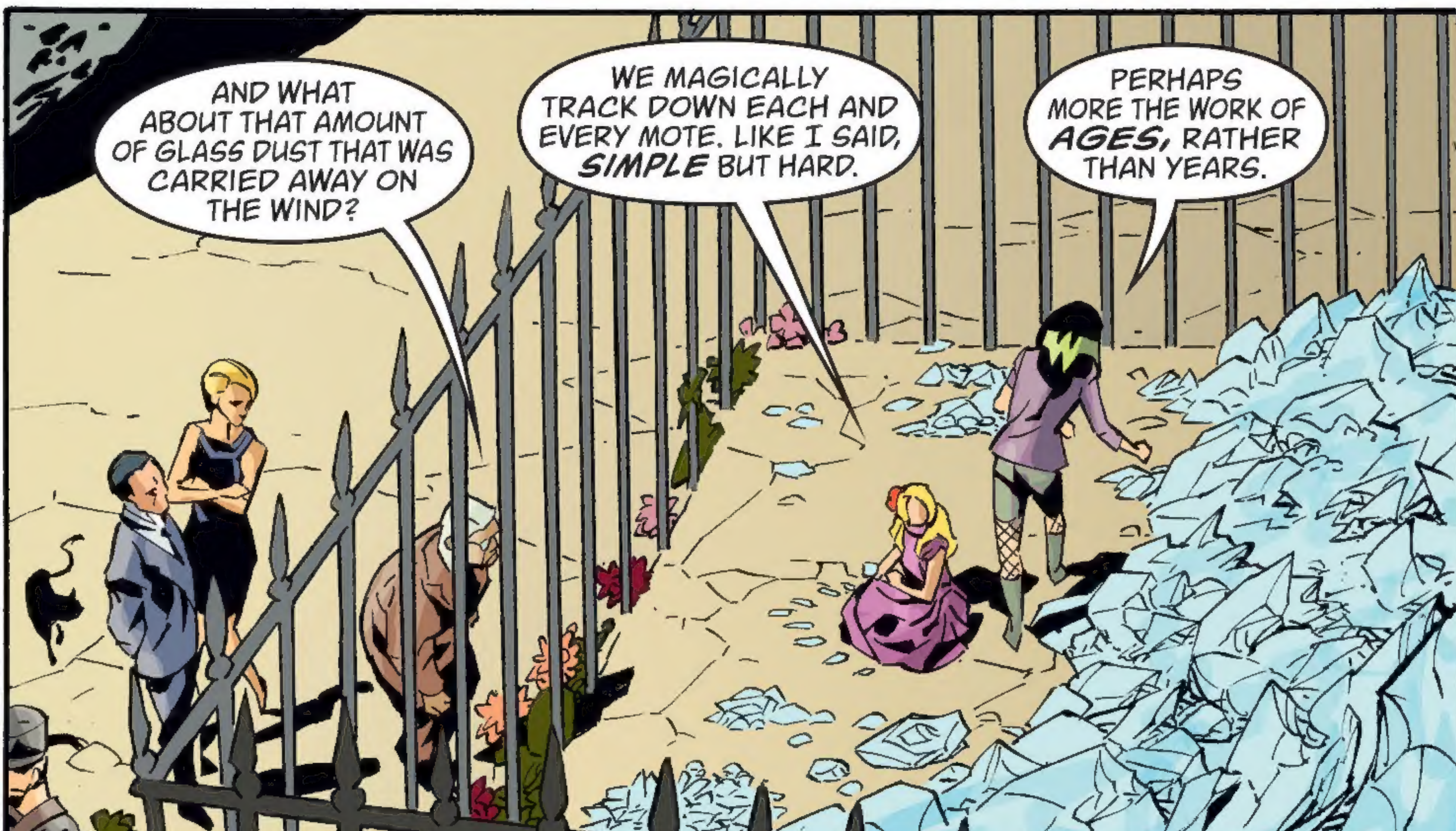
WE CAN'T KNOW FOR SURE UNTIL THE PUZZLE IS NEARLY COMPLETE, KING COLE.



BUT A LOT OF BIGGY SHATTERED DOWN INTO PARTICLES OF **DUST**, WHICH GOT BLOWN ALL OVER. TELL EVERYONE NOT TO SWEEP UP. LET'S BE A BIT UNTIDY FOR A WHILE.



AND ANYTHING YOU DO SWEEP UP, BRING IT HERE. WE'VE GOT A **SPELL** IN PROGRESS TO IDENTIFY HIS PARTS FROM REGULAR OLD DIRT AND DUST.

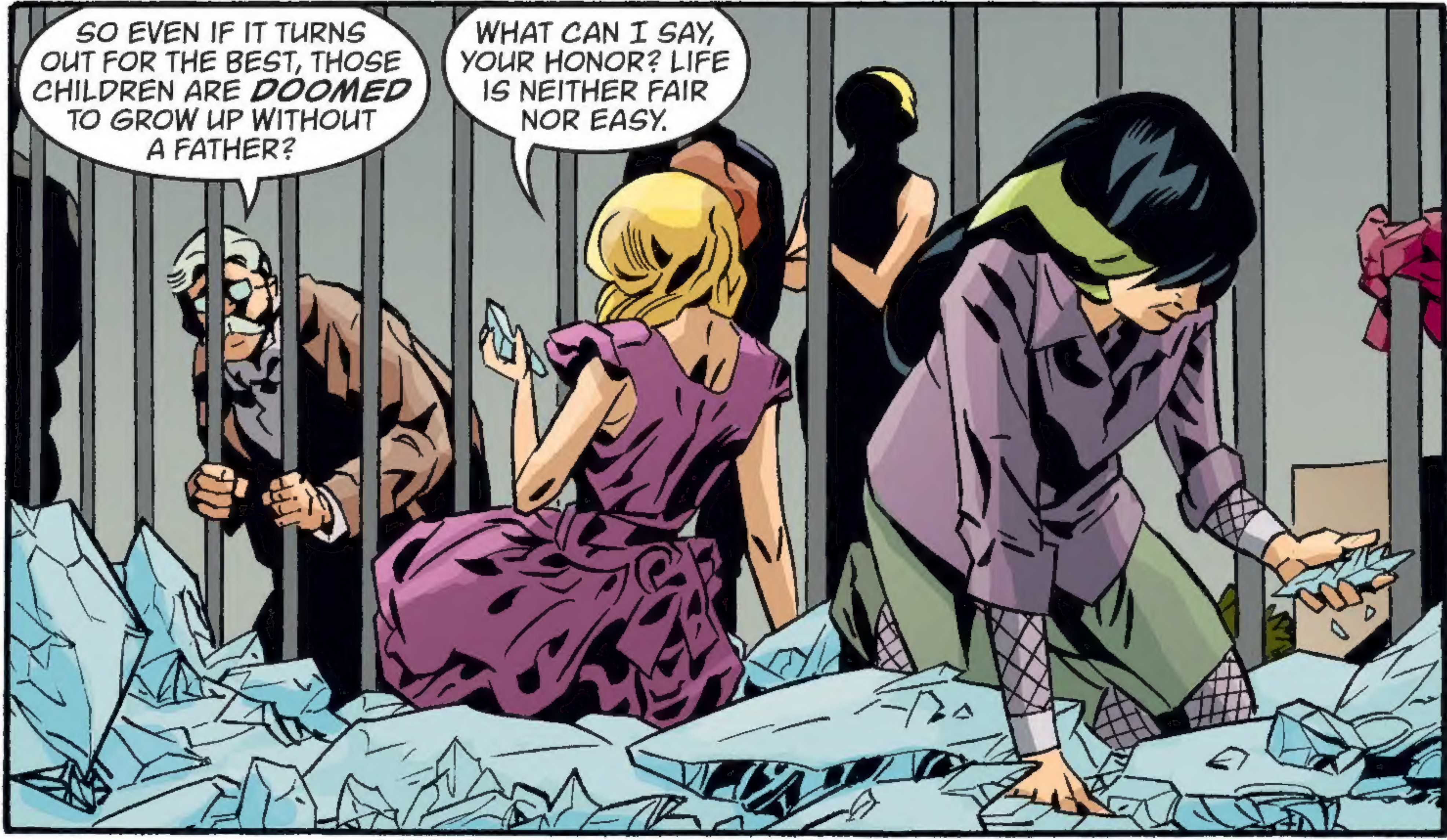


AND WHAT ABOUT THAT AMOUNT OF GLASS DUST THAT WAS CARRIED AWAY ON THE WIND?

WE MAGICALLY TRACK DOWN EACH AND EVERY MOTE. LIKE I SAID, **SIMPLE** BUT HARD.

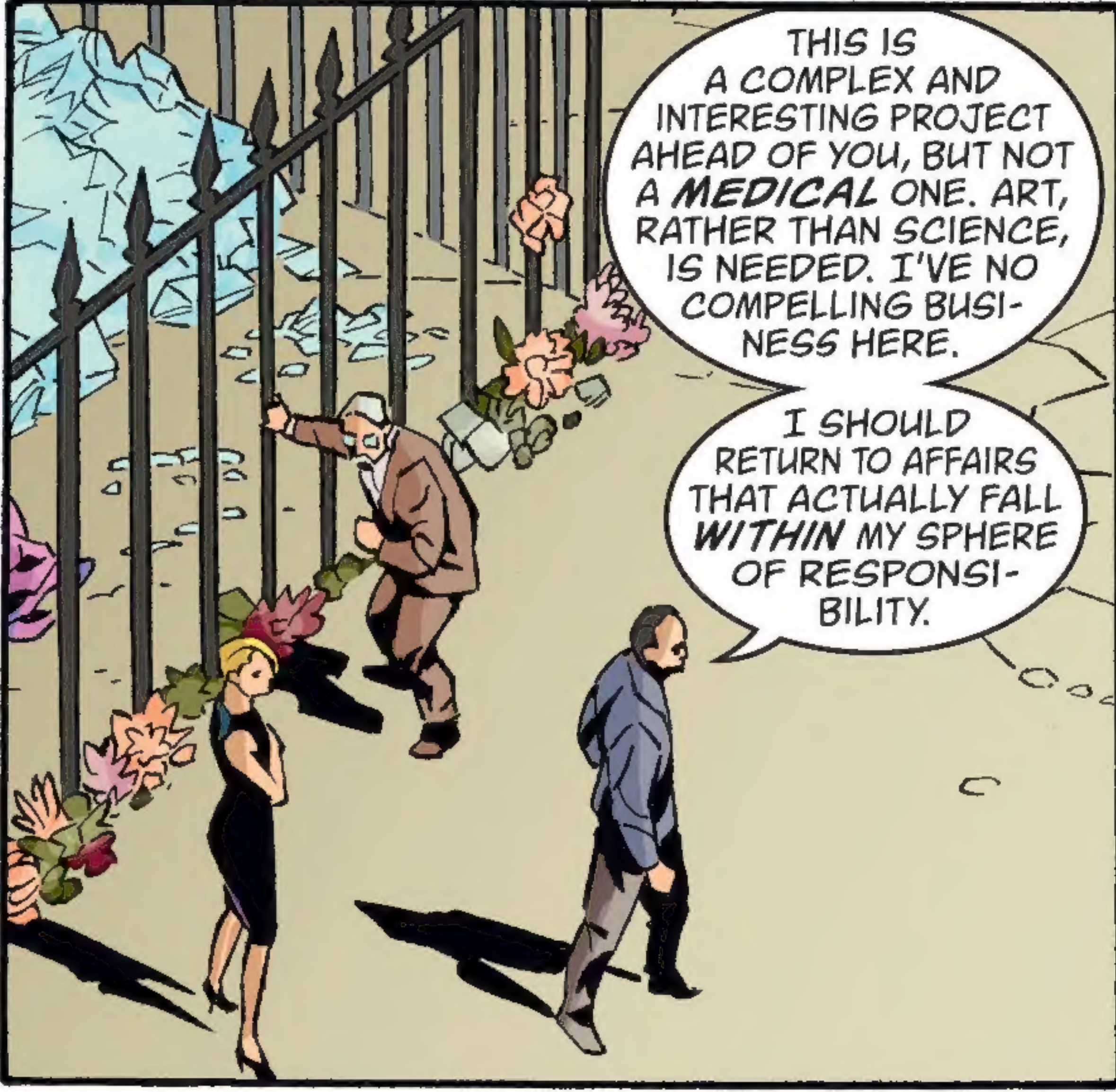
PERHAPS MORE THE WORK OF **AGES**, RATHER THAN YEARS.





SO EVEN IF IT TURNS OUT FOR THE BEST, THOSE CHILDREN ARE **DOOMED** TO GROW UP WITHOUT A FATHER?

WHAT CAN I SAY, YOUR HONOR? LIFE IS NEITHER FAIR NOR EASY.



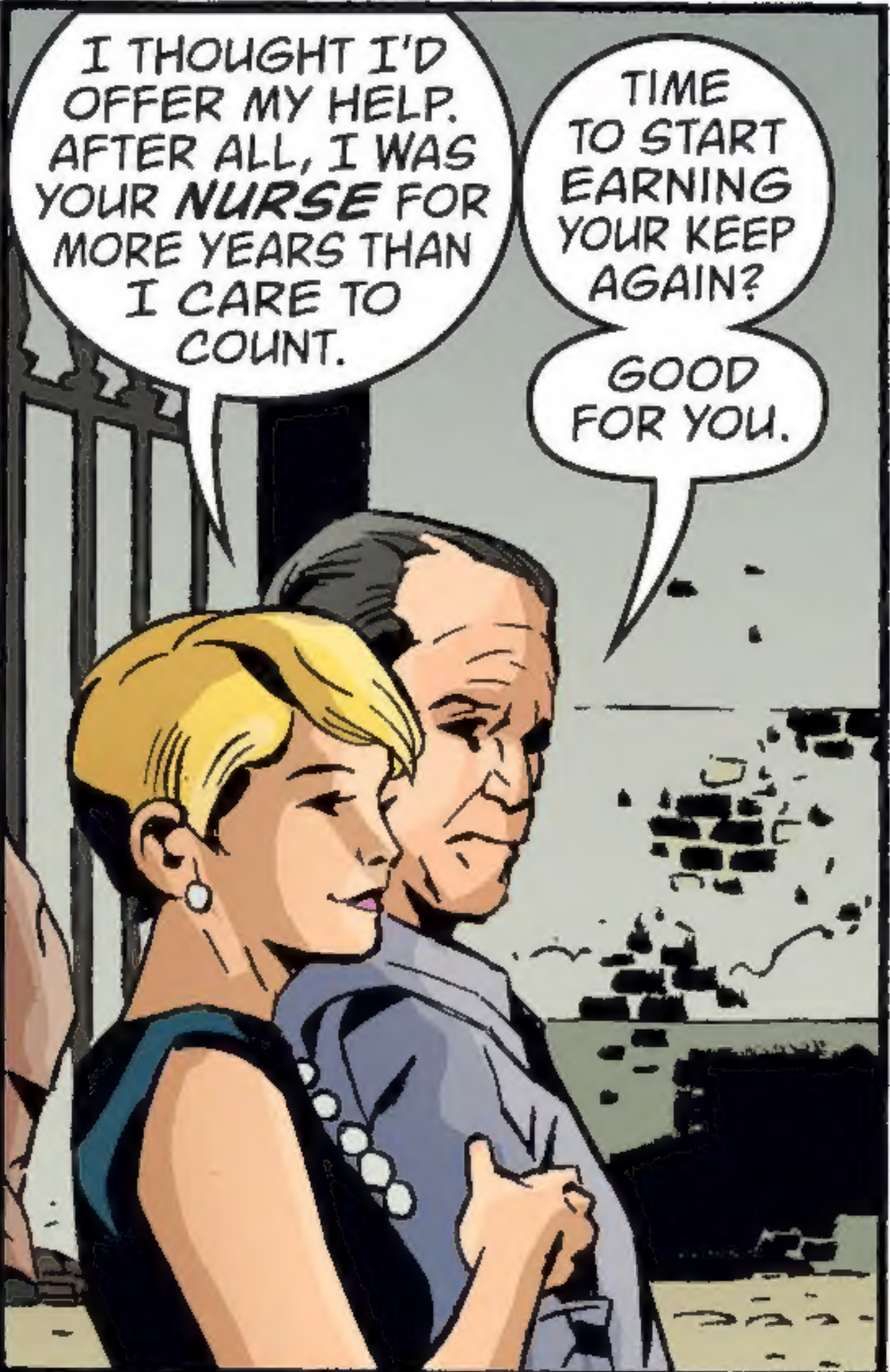
THIS IS A COMPLEX AND INTERESTING PROJECT AHEAD OF YOU, BUT NOT A **MEDICAL** ONE. ART, RATHER THAN SCIENCE, IS NEEDED. I'VE NO COMPELLING BUSINESS HERE.

I SHOULD RETURN TO AFFAIRS THAT ACTUALLY FALL **WITHIN** MY SPHERE OF RESPONSIBILITY.



WILL YOU BE PERFORMING AN AUTOPSY ON PRINCE BRANDISH'S BODY SOON, DOCTOR?

IT'S MY FIRST ITEM OF BUSINESS TODAY, MISS DUGLAS. WHY DO YOU ASK?



I THOUGHT I'D OFFER MY HELP. AFTER ALL, I WAS YOUR **NURSE** FOR MORE YEARS THAN I CARE TO COUNT.

TIME TO START EARNING YOUR KEEP AGAIN?

GOOD FOR YOU.



WE'LL WANT TO EXAMINE **HIS** BODY TOO, DOCTOR. IN CASE MORE THAN HIS SWORD WAS MAGICAL.

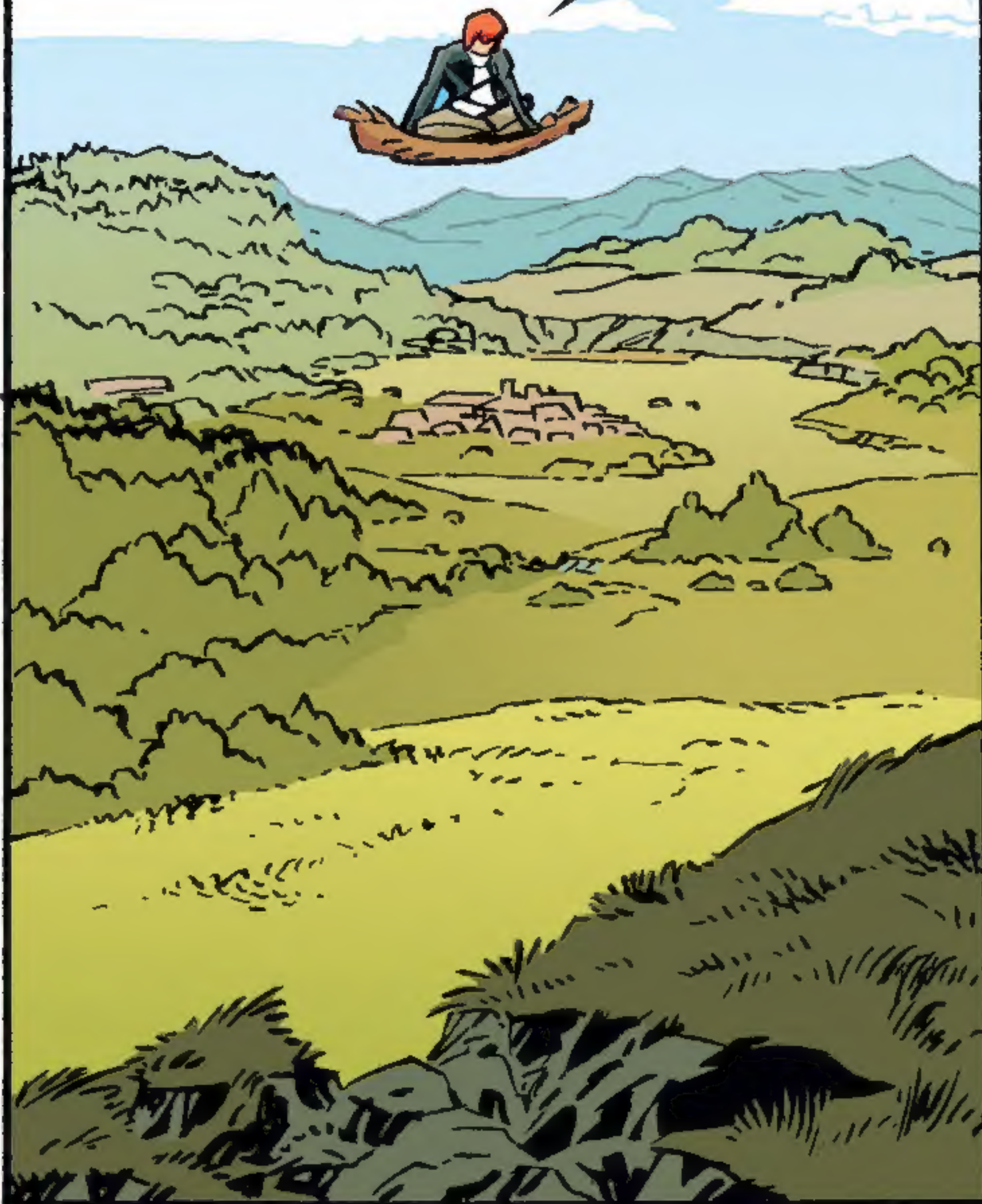
WHEN I'M DONE, YOUNG LADY. **DIBS**, AS THE MUNDYS SAY.



**N**ORTH AND WEST  
OF THE BIG CITY,  
AND FABLETOWN.

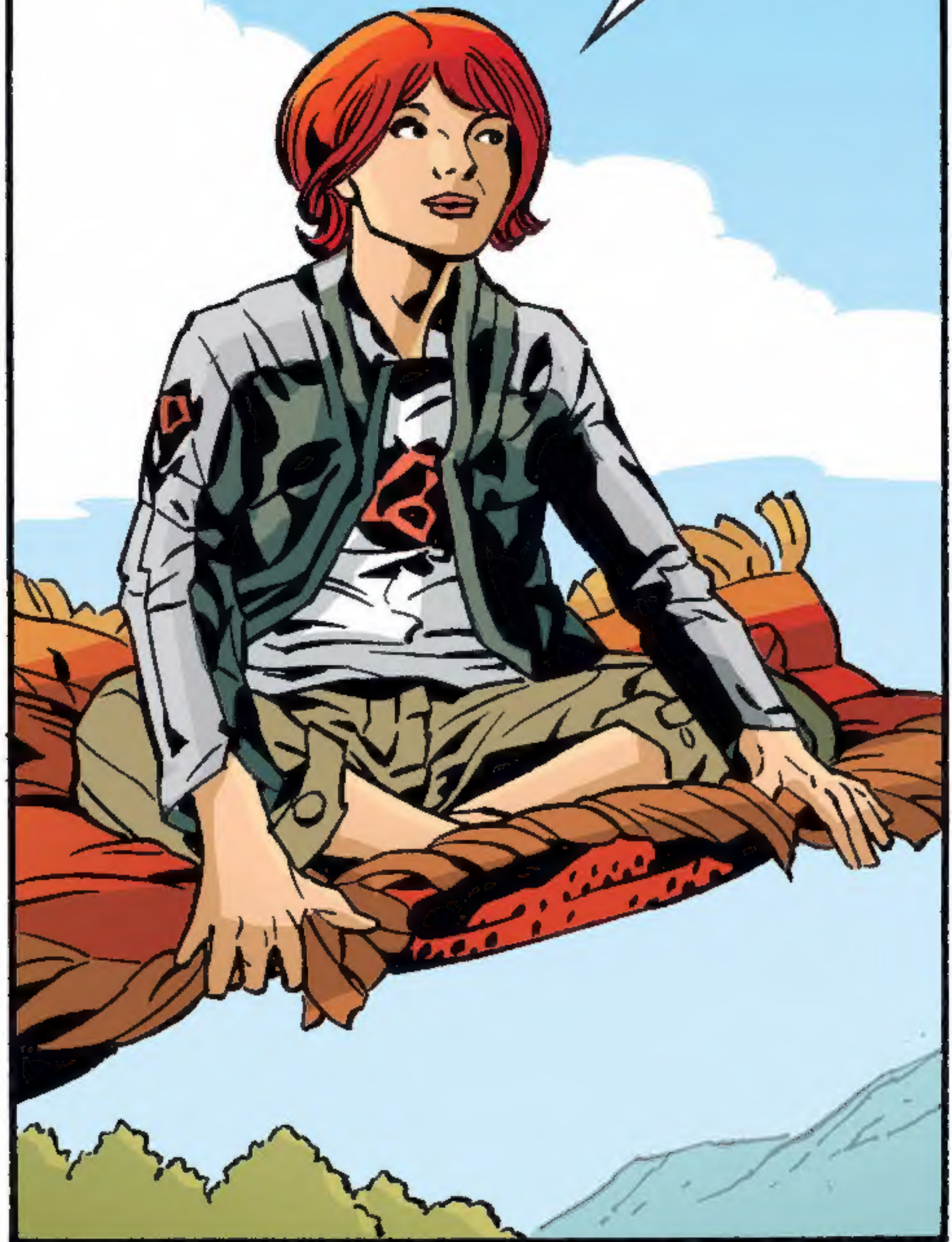
SHE'S  
BACK?

SHE'S  
HOME?



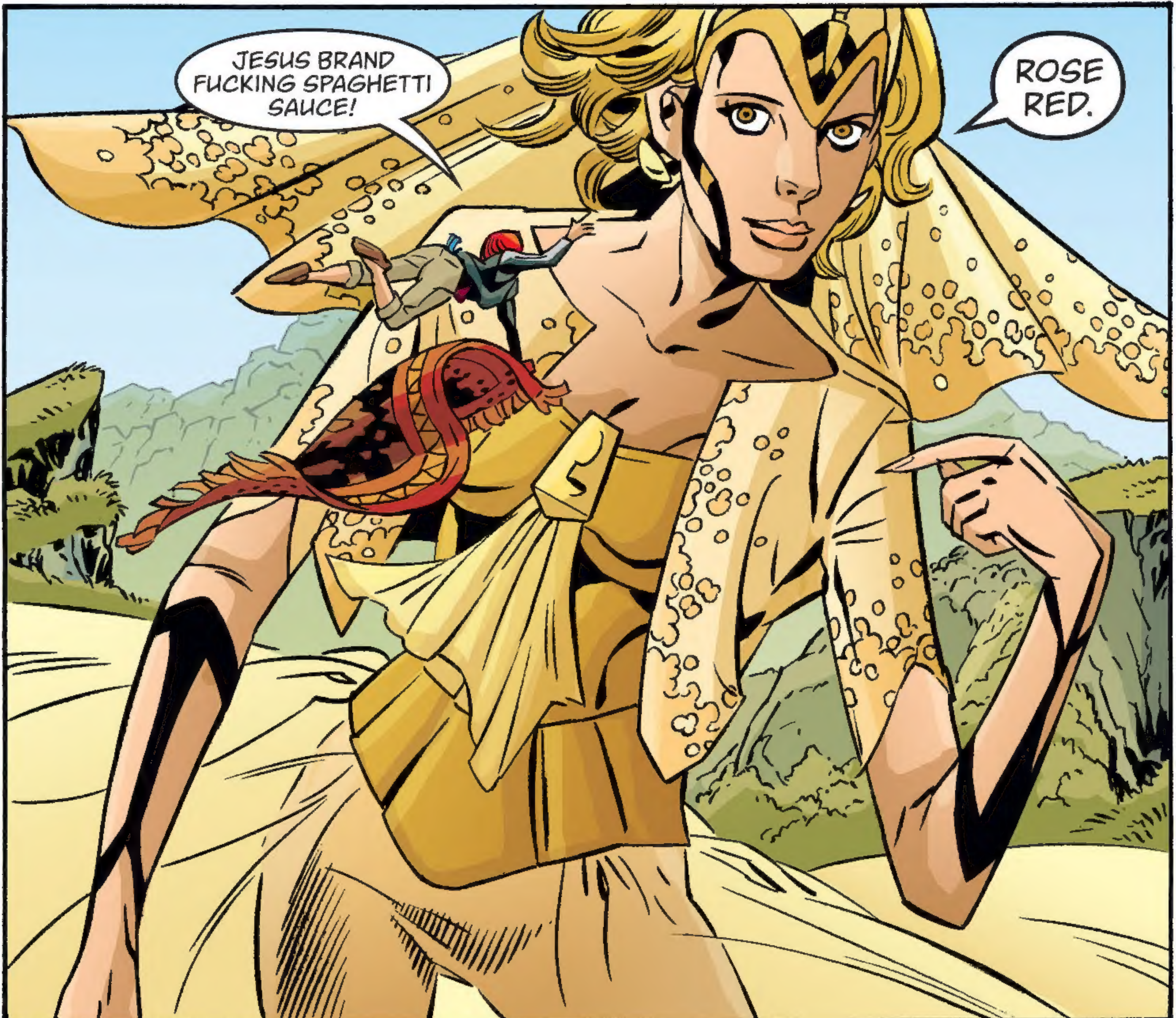
**O**N THE BORDERLANDS  
SEPARATING WOLF  
VALLEY FROM THE REST  
OF THE FARM.

I CAN'T  
**BELIEVE**  
IT!



JESUS BRAND  
FUCKING SPAGHETTI  
SAUCE!

ROSE  
RED.





HOPE!

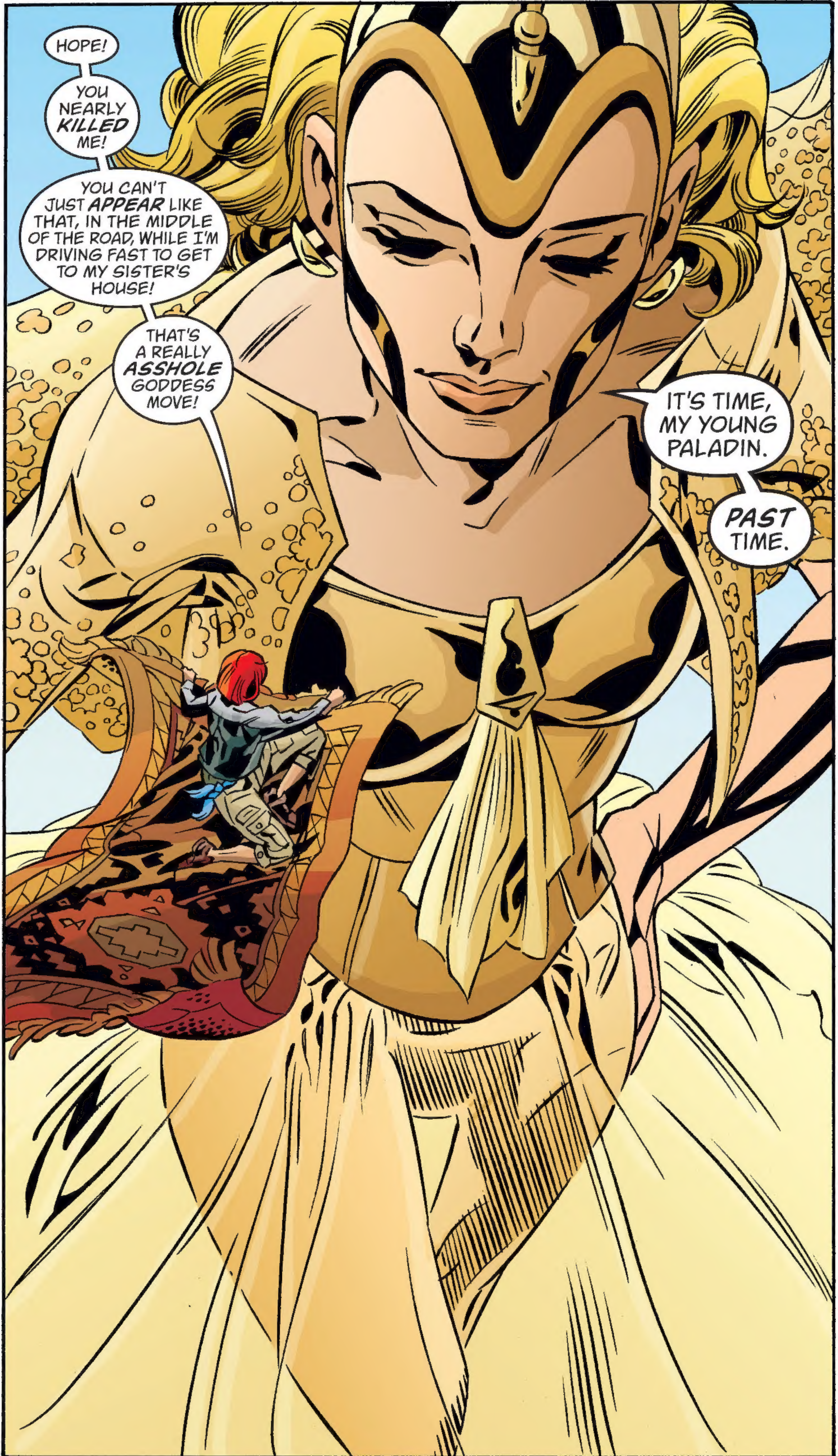
YOU  
NEARLY  
KILLED  
ME!

YOU CAN'T  
JUST **APPEAR** LIKE  
THAT, IN THE MIDDLE  
OF THE ROAD, WHILE I'M  
DRIVING FAST TO GET  
TO MY SISTER'S  
HOUSE!

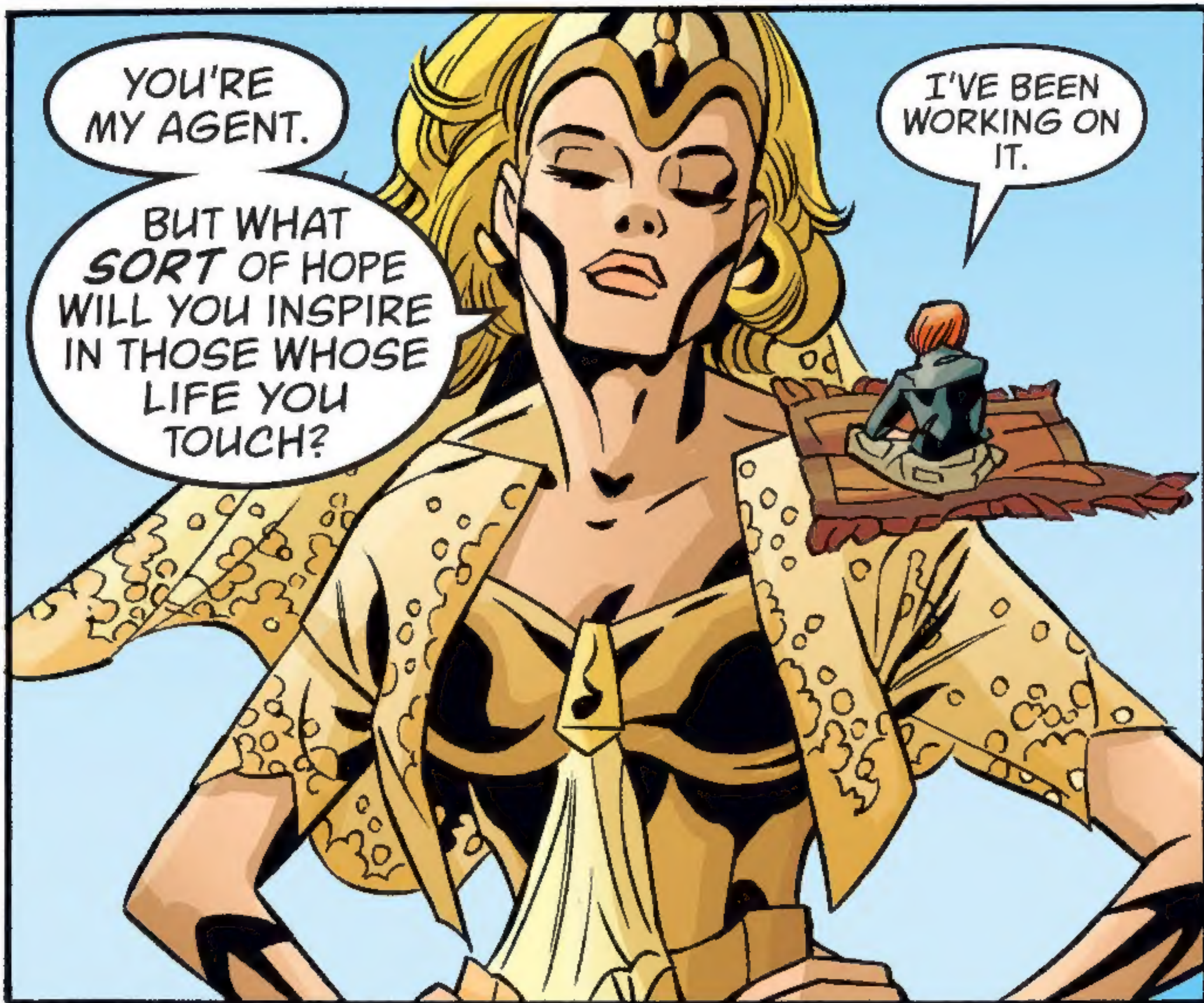
THAT'S  
A REALLY  
**ASSHOLE**  
GODDESS  
MOVE!

IT'S TIME,  
MY YOUNG  
PALADIN.

**PAST**  
TIME.







YOU'RE MY AGENT.

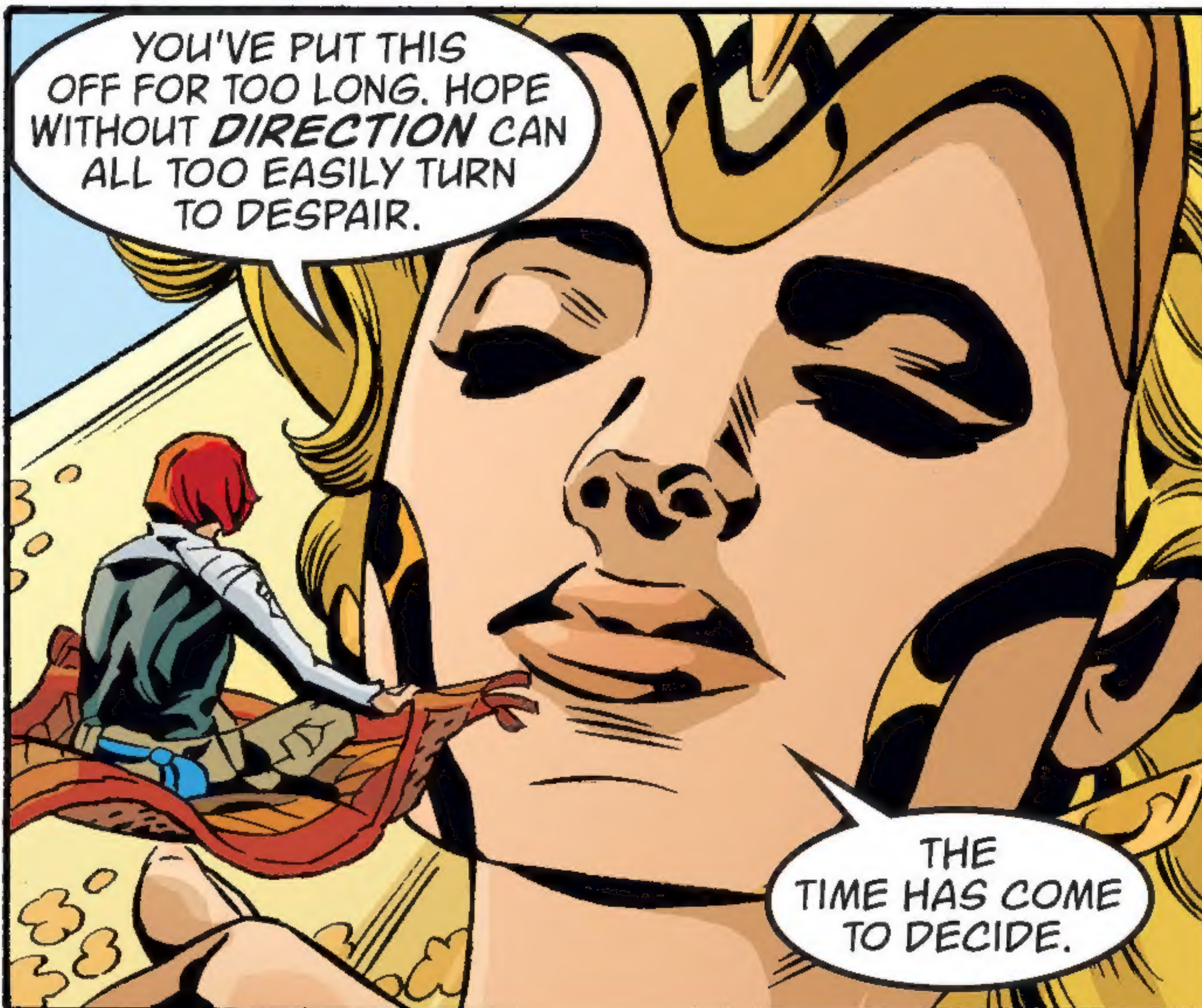
BUT WHAT SORT OF HOPE WILL YOU INSPIRE IN THOSE WHOSE LIFE YOU TOUCH?

I'VE BEEN WORKING ON IT.



SOMETHING TO DO WITH *SECOND CHANCES*, I THINK.

GOD KNOWS I'VE NEEDED ENOUGH OF THEM.



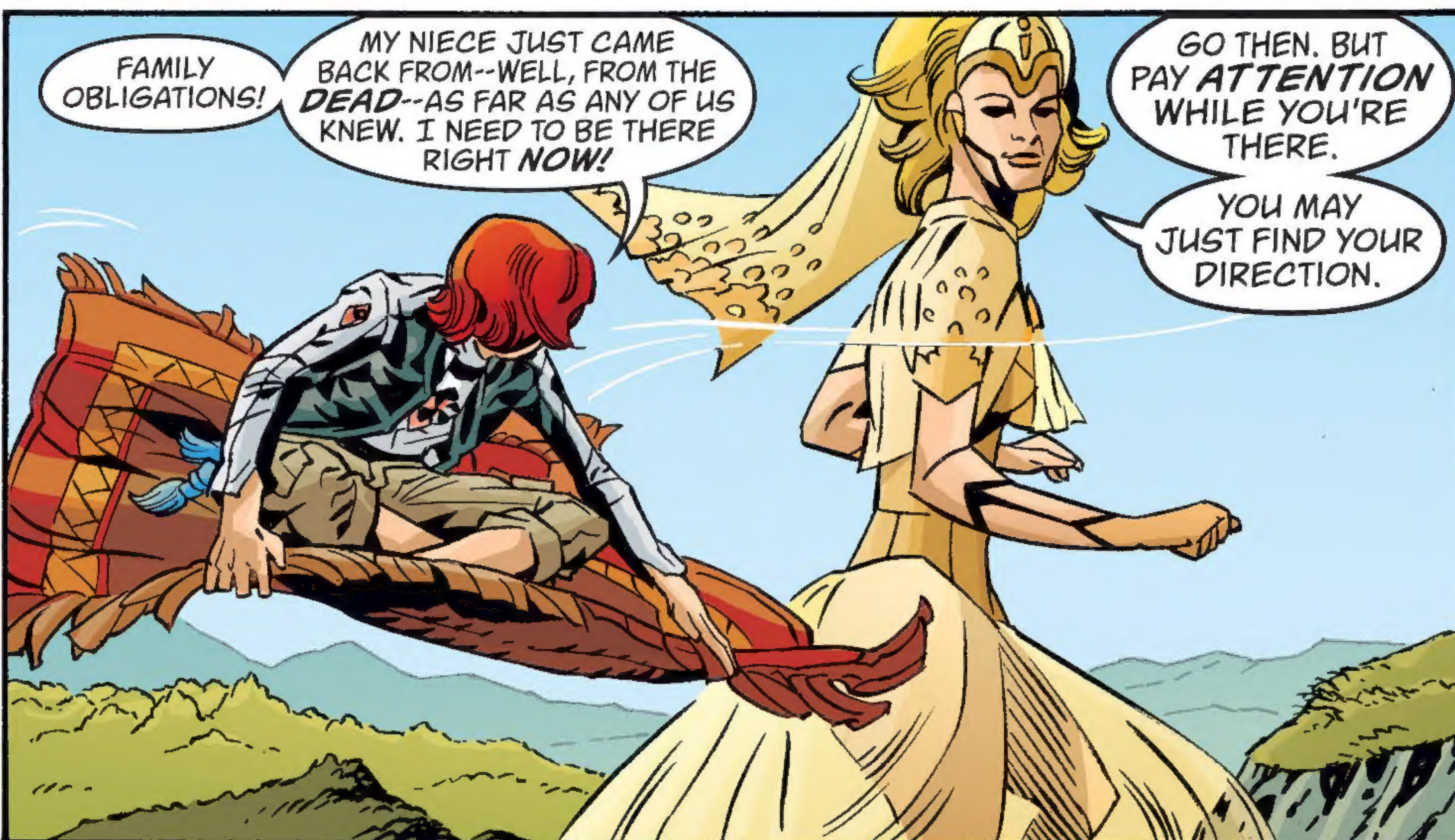
YOU'VE PUT THIS OFF FOR TOO LONG. HOPE WITHOUT *DIRECTION* CAN ALL TOO EASILY TURN TO DESPAIR.

THE TIME HAS COME TO DECIDE.



OKAY, OKAY! I REALIZE I OWE YOU AN ANSWER.

HELL'S BELLS, I OWE *MYSELF* ONE TOO, FOR THAT MATTER-- BUT NOT JUST YET.



FAMILY OBLIGATIONS!

MY NIECE JUST CAME BACK FROM--WELL, FROM THE *DEAD*--AS FAR AS ANY OF US KNEW. I NEED TO BE THERE *RIGHT NOW!*

GO THEN. BUT PAY *ATTENTION* WHILE YOU'RE THERE.

YOU MAY JUST FIND YOUR *DIRECTION*.





JUST PLUG THAT THING INTO THE--**THERE** YOU GO. NOW HIT THE--NO, THE OTHER BUTTON. THE ONE WITH THE LITTLE RED DOT.

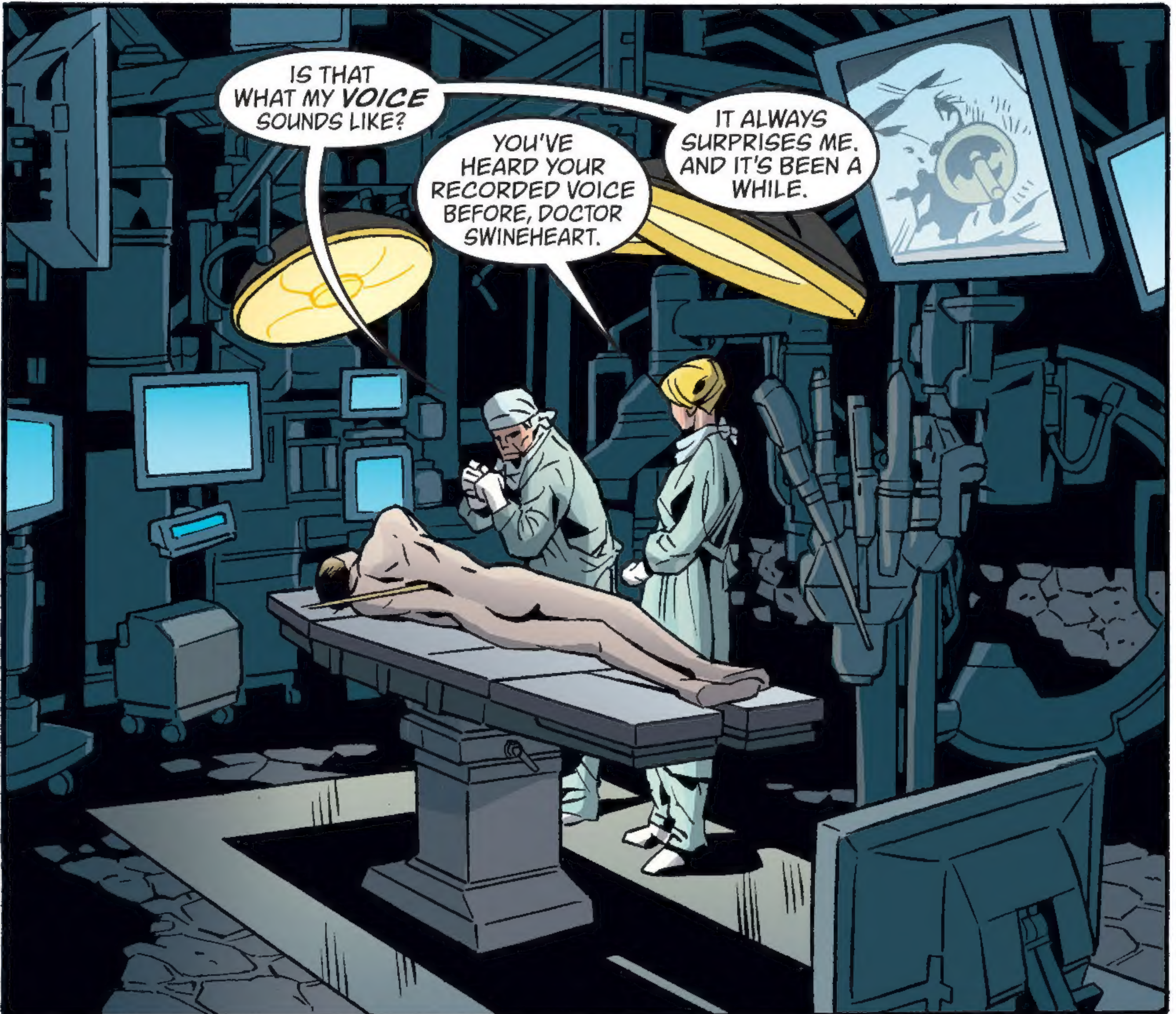
TESTING...

...TESTING...



OKAY, PLAY THAT BACK TO ME, PLEASE.

TESTING... TESTING...

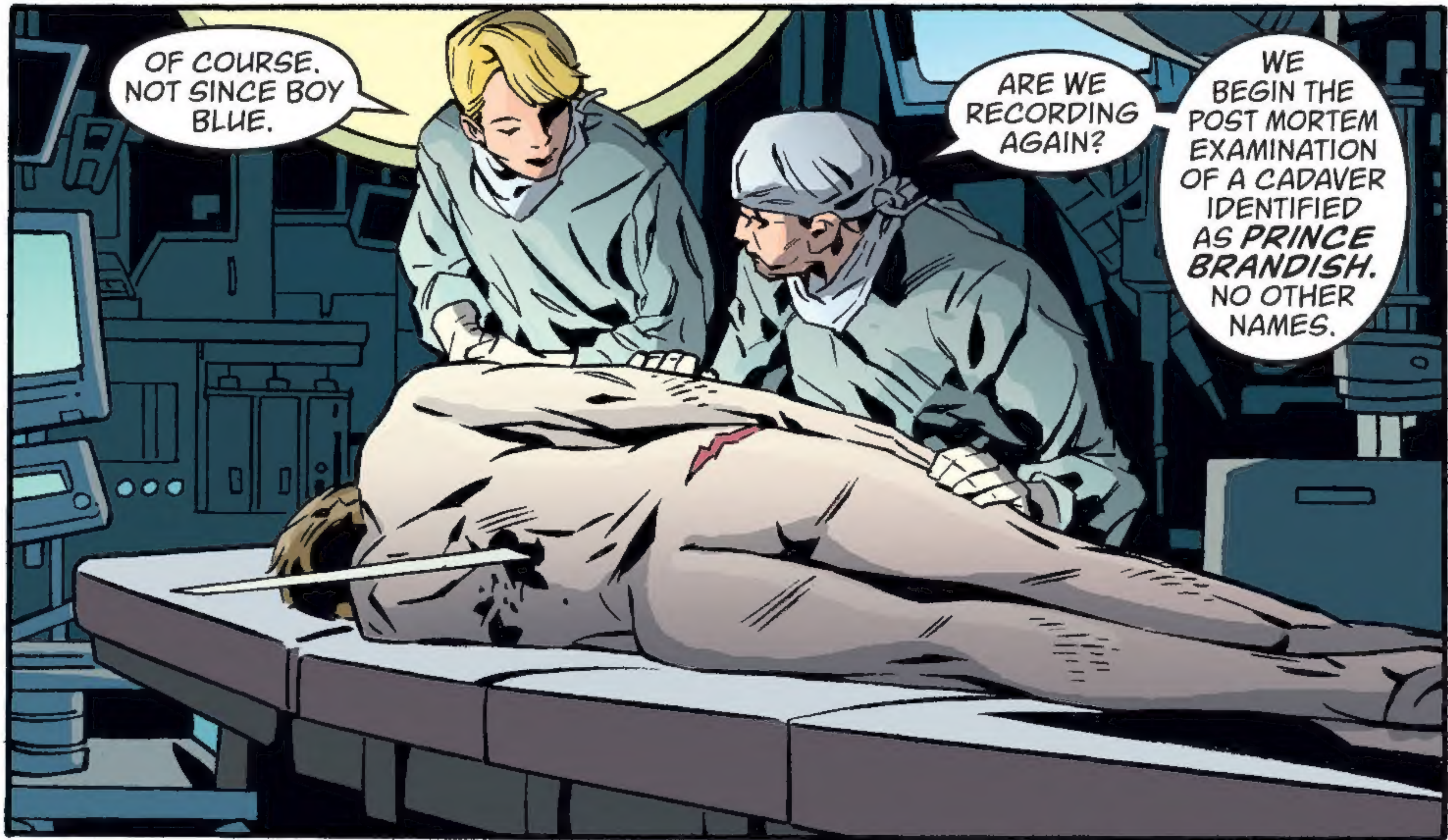


IS THAT WHAT MY **VOICE** SOUNDS LIKE?

YOU'VE HEARD YOUR RECORDED VOICE BEFORE, DOCTOR SWINEHEART.

IT ALWAYS SURPRISES ME. AND IT'S BEEN A WHILE.

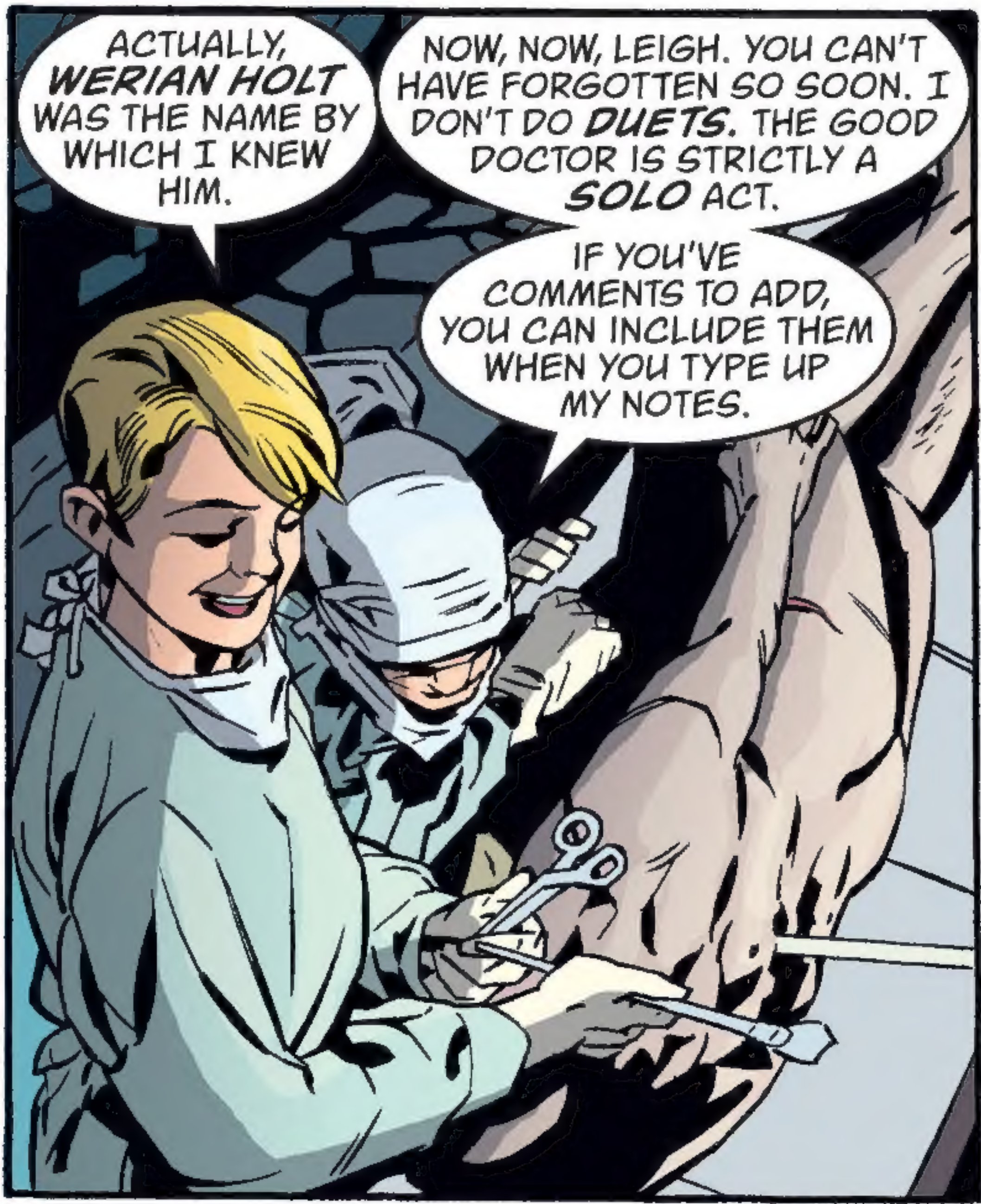




OF COURSE. NOT SINCE BOY BLUE.

ARE WE RECORDING AGAIN?

WE BEGIN THE POST MORTEM EXAMINATION OF A CADAVER IDENTIFIED AS PRINCE BRANDISH. NO OTHER NAMES.



ACTUALLY, **WERIAN HOLT** WAS THE NAME BY WHICH I KNEW HIM.

NOW, NOW, LEIGH. YOU CAN'T HAVE FORGOTTEN SO SOON. I DON'T DO **DUETS**. THE GOOD DOCTOR IS STRICTLY A **SOLO ACT**.

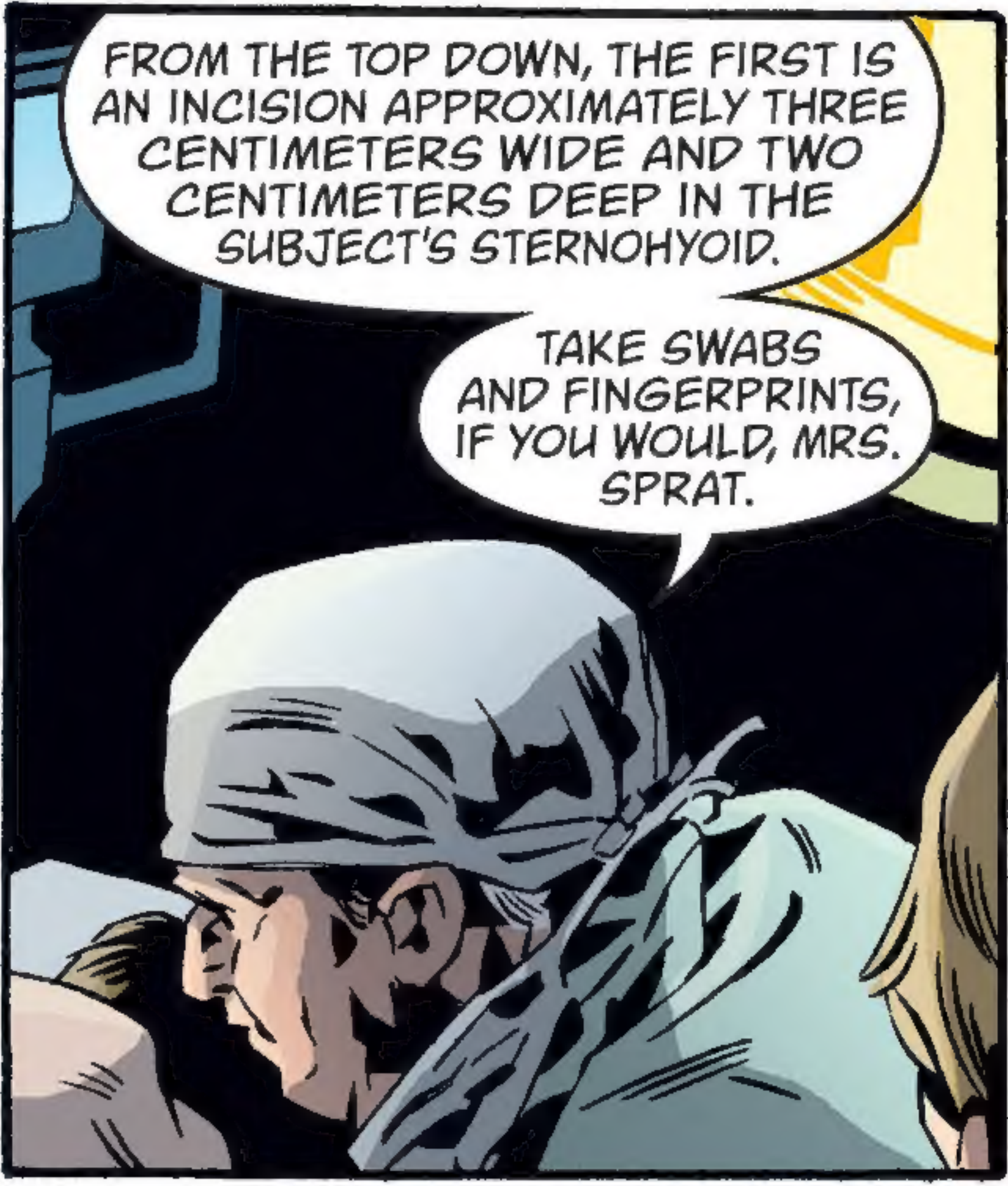
IF YOU'VE COMMENTS TO ADD, YOU CAN INCLUDE THEM WHEN YOU TYPE UP MY NOTES.



SUBJECT IS MALE, HUMAN. APPROXIMATELY TWELVE STONE. APPEARS TO BE THIRTY YEARS OF AGE, PLUS OR MINUS. GINGER HAIR. NO NOTICEABLE SCARS OR TATTOOS.



THERE ARE SIX INJURIES ON THE BODY. FIVE ARE MINOR. ONE IS MAJOR AND THE PUTATIVE CAUSE OF DEATH.



FROM THE TOP DOWN, THE FIRST IS AN INCISION APPROXIMATELY THREE CENTIMETERS WIDE AND TWO CENTIMETERS DEEP IN THE SUBJECT'S STERNOHYOID.

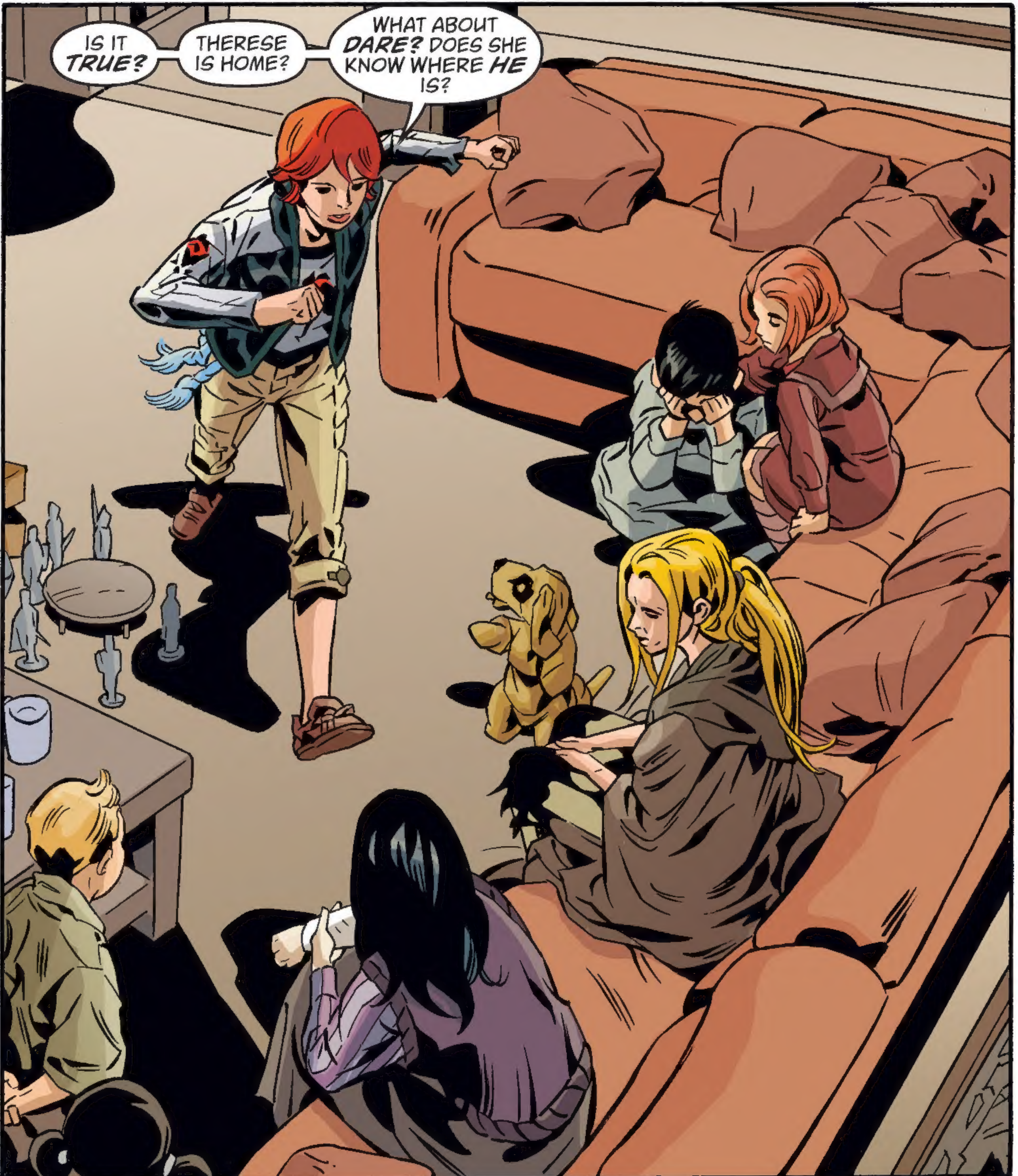
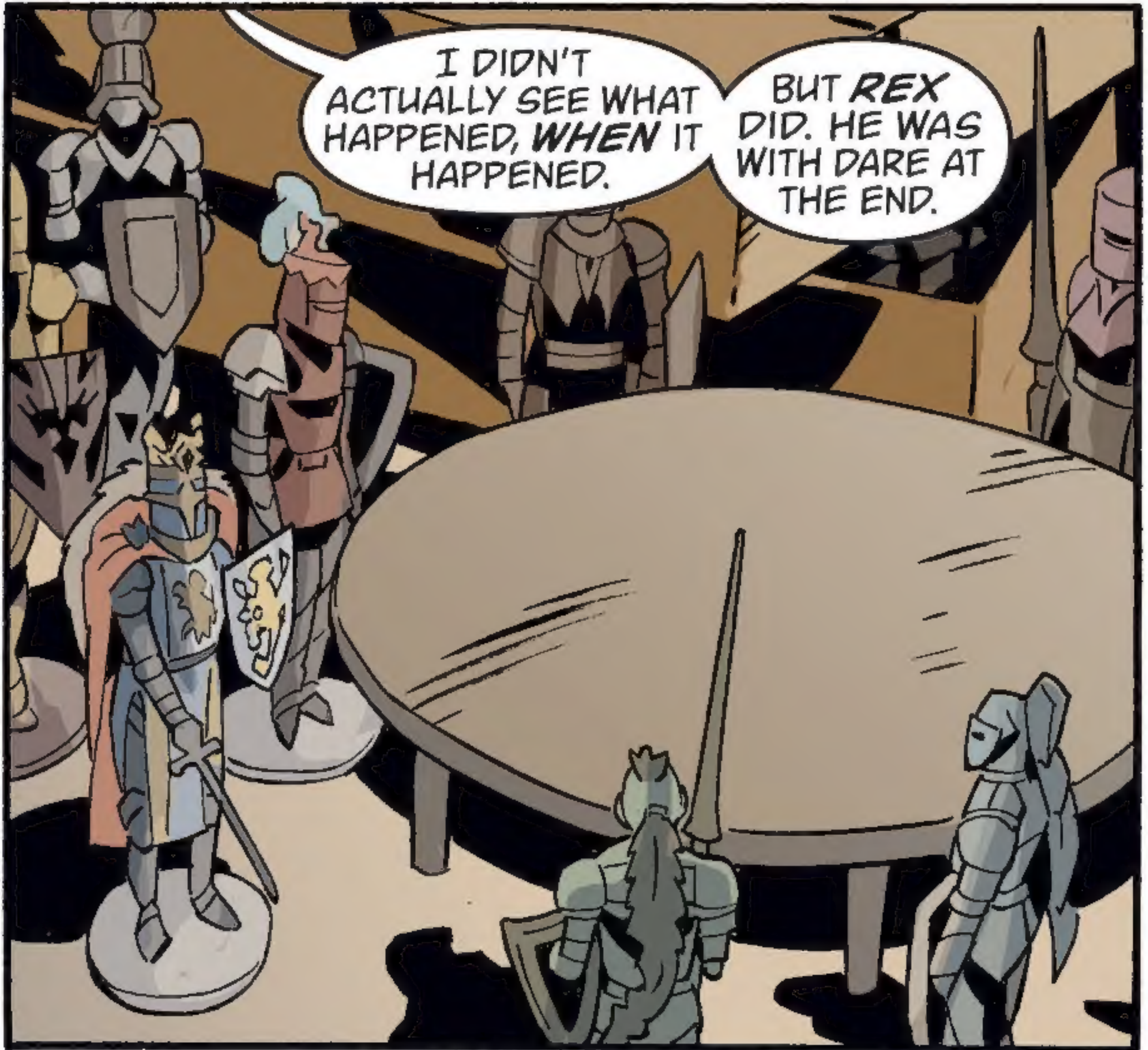
TAKE SWABS AND FINGERPRINTS, IF YOU WOULD, MRS. SPRAT.



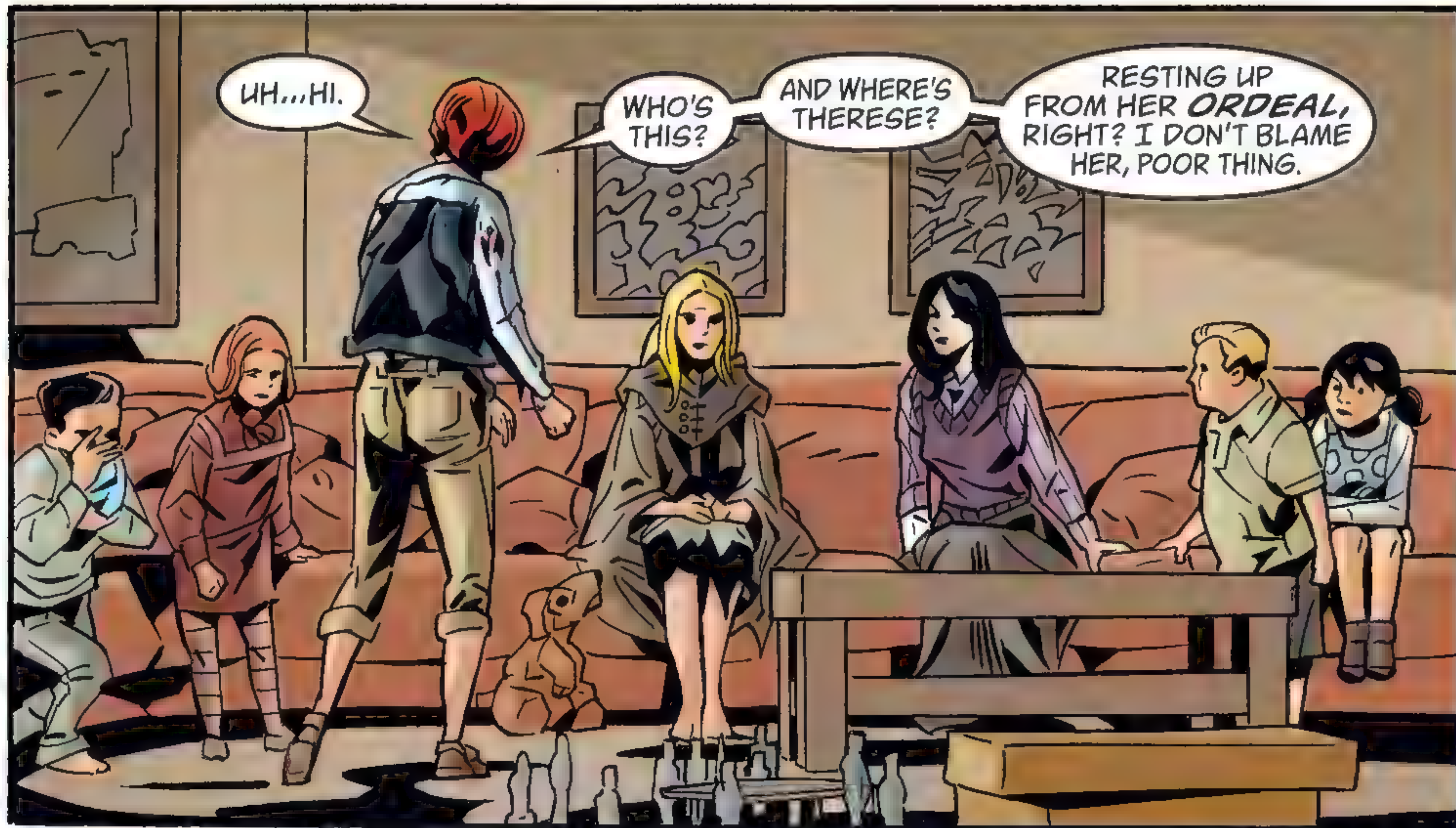
SORRY--MISS DUGLAS.

THE SECOND CUT IS LOCATED...OH, BY THE WAY, I'VE BEEN MEANING TO TELL YOU. I'M WILLING TO **SLEEP** WITH YOU NOW, NURSE, IF YOU'RE STILL INTERESTED.









UH...HI.

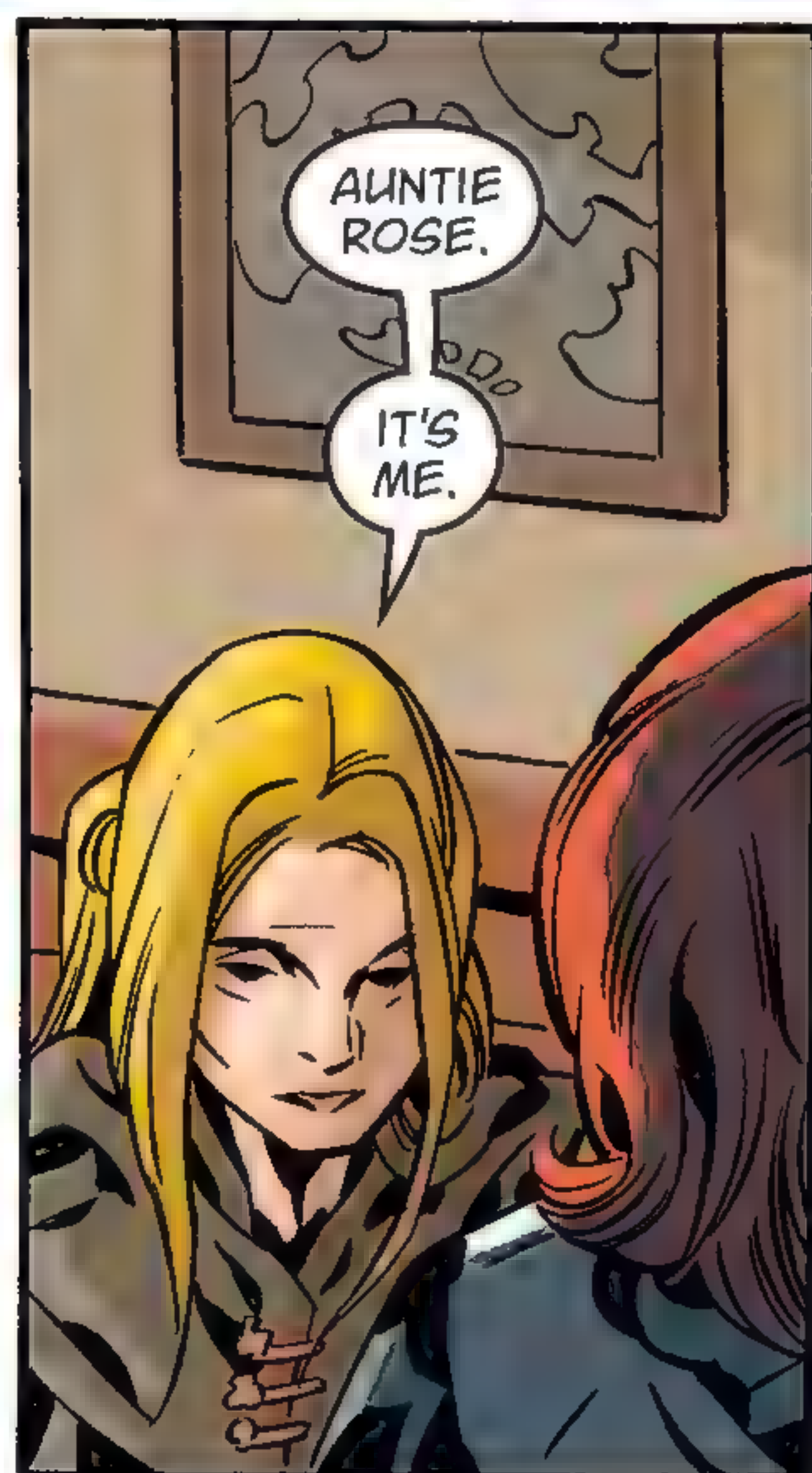
WHO'S THIS?

AND WHERE'S THERESE?

RESTING UP FROM HER ORDEAL, RIGHT? I DON'T BLAME HER, POOR THING.



MIND IF I WAKE HER? I'VE GOT ABOUT TWELVE HOURS OF BONE-BREAKING WELCOME-HOME HUGS TO DISPENSE.



AUNTIE ROSE.

IT'S ME.



ME WHO?

ACTUALLY, HOLD THAT THOUGHT. I DON'T CARE WHO, BECAUSE FAMILY BUSINESS COMES FIRST.



WHERE IS SHE, SNOW? DON'T KEEP ME HANGING LIKE THIS.

SHE'S RIGHT HERE. I'M THERESE.



SHUT UP!

GET THE FUCK OUT!









SO, AS I WAS SAYING, NURSE... AH... DUGLAS, IN THE PAST YOU WERE **CLEARLY** ATTRACTED TO ME.

OBSESSIVELY SO, IF WE WANT TO BE CANDID.

READY TO FORSWEAR YOUR **MARRIAGE** VOWS, BACK WHEN SPRATT WAS STILL WITH US.

TEXTBOOK **HERO** WORSHIP, AND WHO COULD BLAME YOU?

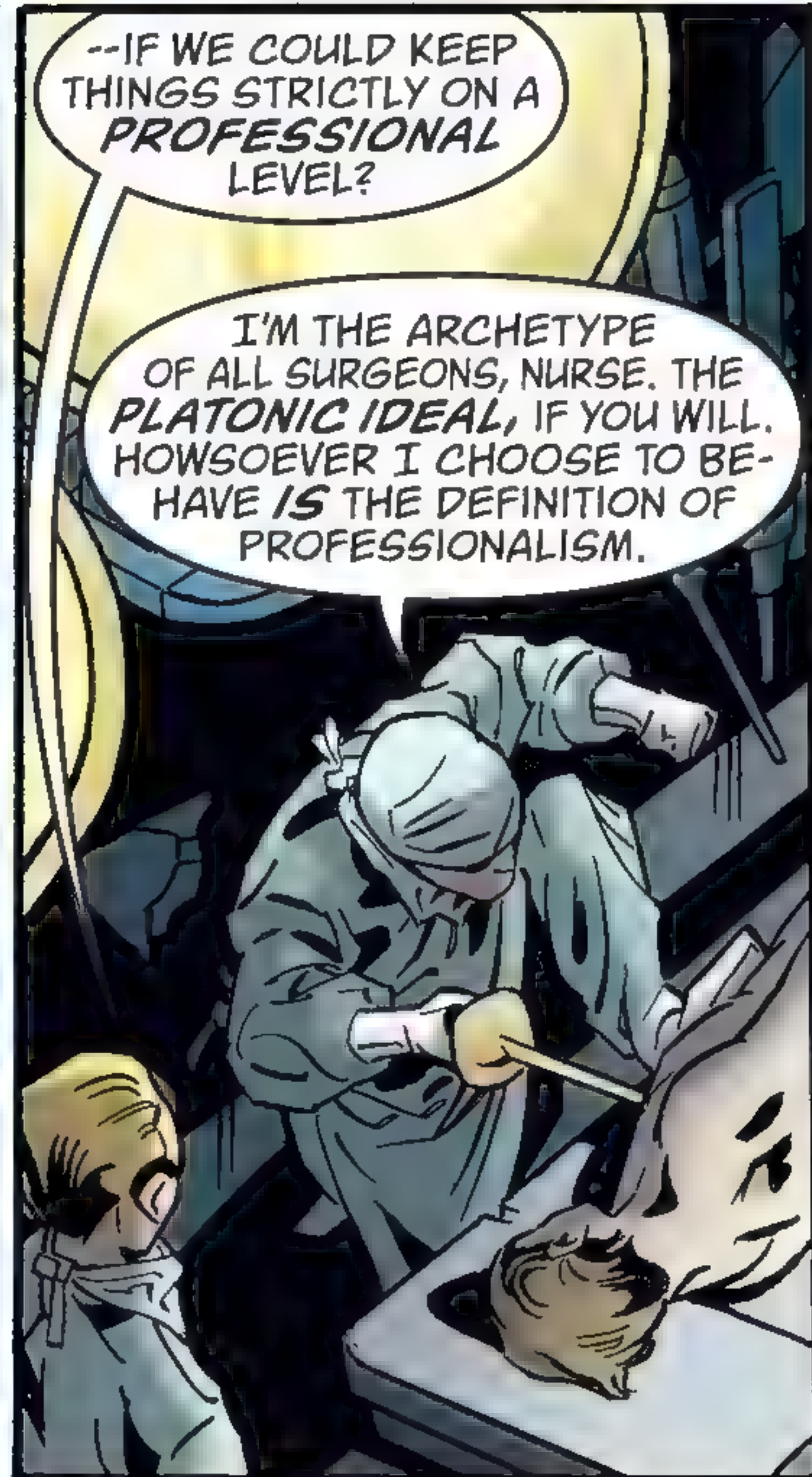
WORKING IN SUCH CLOSE PROXIMITY TO **ME** FOR SO LONG IS GOING TO TAKE ITS TOLL.

BUT I WASN'T ATTRACTED TO **YOU**, SO NOTHING COULD EVER COME OF IT.

DOCTOR--







--IF WE COULD KEEP THINGS STRICTLY ON A PROFESSIONAL LEVEL?

I'M THE ARCHETYPE OF ALL SURGEONS, NURSE. THE *PLATONIC IDEAL*, IF YOU WILL. *HOWSOEVER I CHOOSE TO BEHAVE IS THE DEFINITION OF PROFESSIONALISM.*



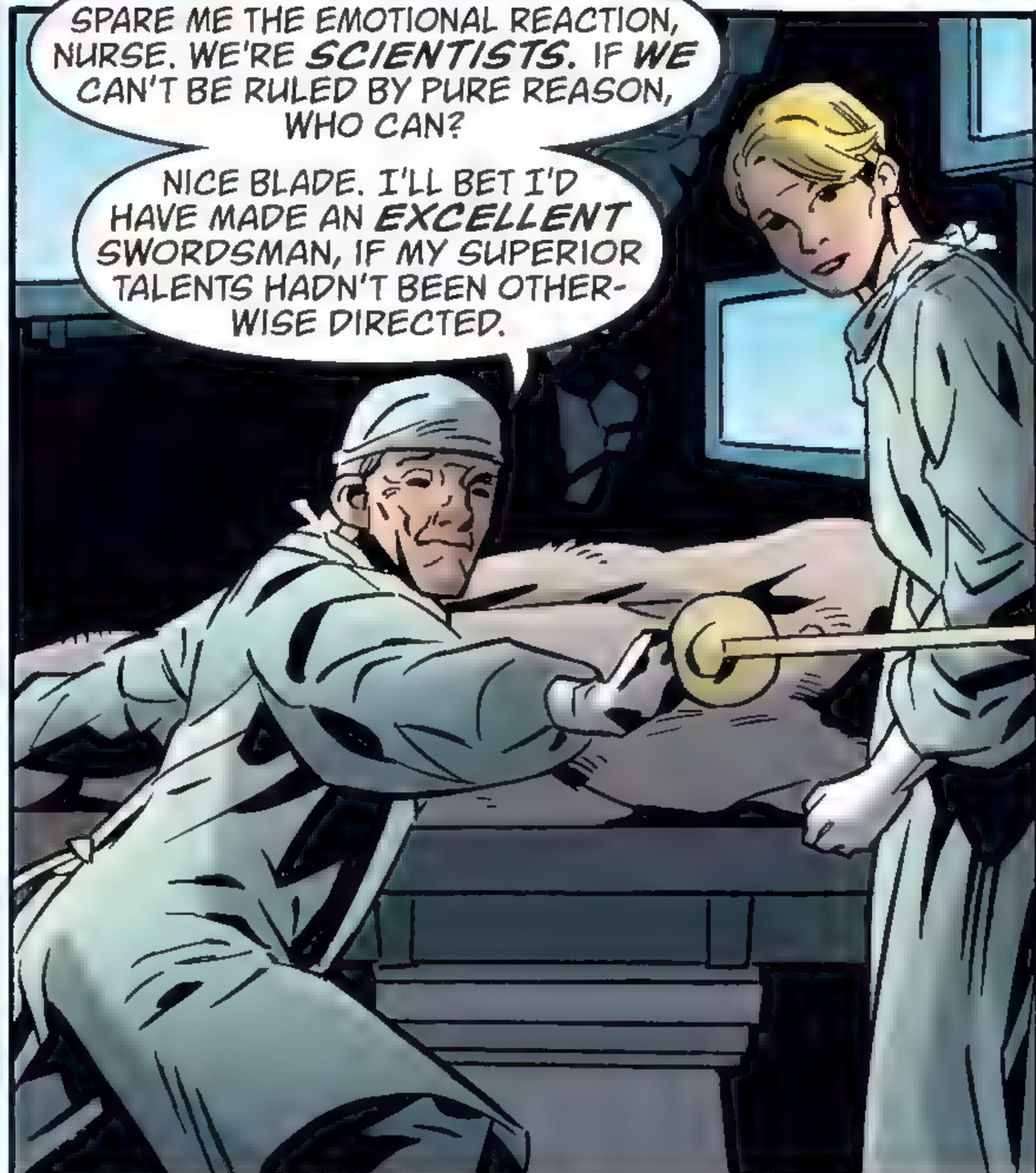
*NNNNH*  
THERE WE GO!



YOU WERE MORBIDLY *OBES*E, BUT NOW YOU'VE A HEALTHY BODY. OF COURSE I'M ATTRACTED NOW, WHERE I WASN'T BEFORE.

DOCTOR!

I WILL THANK YOU NOT TO--



SPARE ME THE EMOTIONAL REACTION, NURSE. WE'RE *SCIENTISTS*. IF WE CAN'T BE RULED BY PURE REASON, WHO CAN?

NICE BLADE. I'LL BET I'D HAVE MADE AN *EXCELLENT* SWORDSMAN, IF MY SUPERIOR TALENTS HADN'T BEEN OTHERWISE DIRECTED.



BEST PHOTOGRAPH THIS BEFORE YOU CLEAN AND RETURN IT.

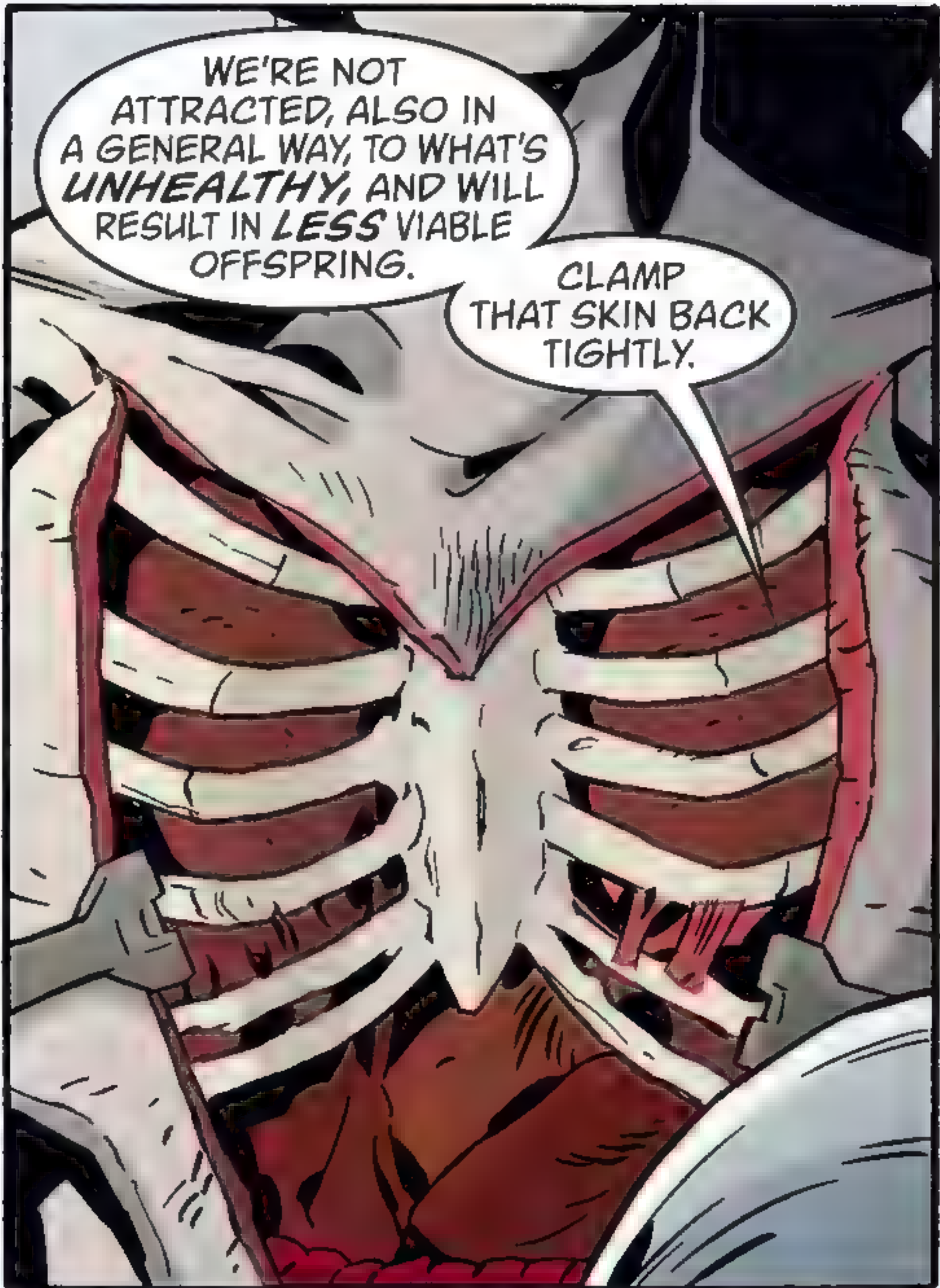
LIKE ALL SPECIES, WE DIDN'T SELECT OUR STANDARDS OF ATTRACTION ARBITRARILY OFF A LIST, WHERE ANY SET OF STANDARDS WOULD HAVE BEEN AS GOOD AS ANOTHER.





WE'RE GENERALLY ATTRACTED TO WHAT'S HEALTHY, AND WHAT WILL CREATE MORE VIABLE OFFSPRING.

BEGINNING MY Y INCISION. INTO THE BODY CAVITY WE GO.



WE'RE NOT ATTRACTED, ALSO IN A GENERAL WAY, TO WHAT'S UNHEALTHY, AND WILL RESULT IN LESS VIABLE OFFSPRING.

CLAMP THAT SKIN BACK TIGHTLY.



NO BROKEN RIBS, BUT THERE'S THAT NICK OUT OF THE STERNUM, EXACTLY WHERE I CALLED IT.

SO YOU WANT TO MAKE BABIES WITH ME?

NO, OF COURSE NOT. HAND ME THE SAW, PLEASE.



BUT THAT'S THE ENGINE DRIVING THE DESIRE. QUIT PRETENDING TO BE INSULTED. YOU KNOW THIS AS WELL AS I.

SPREADERS.



HELLO, WHAT'S THIS?

NOW THAT'S ONE FOR THE RECORD BOOKS.



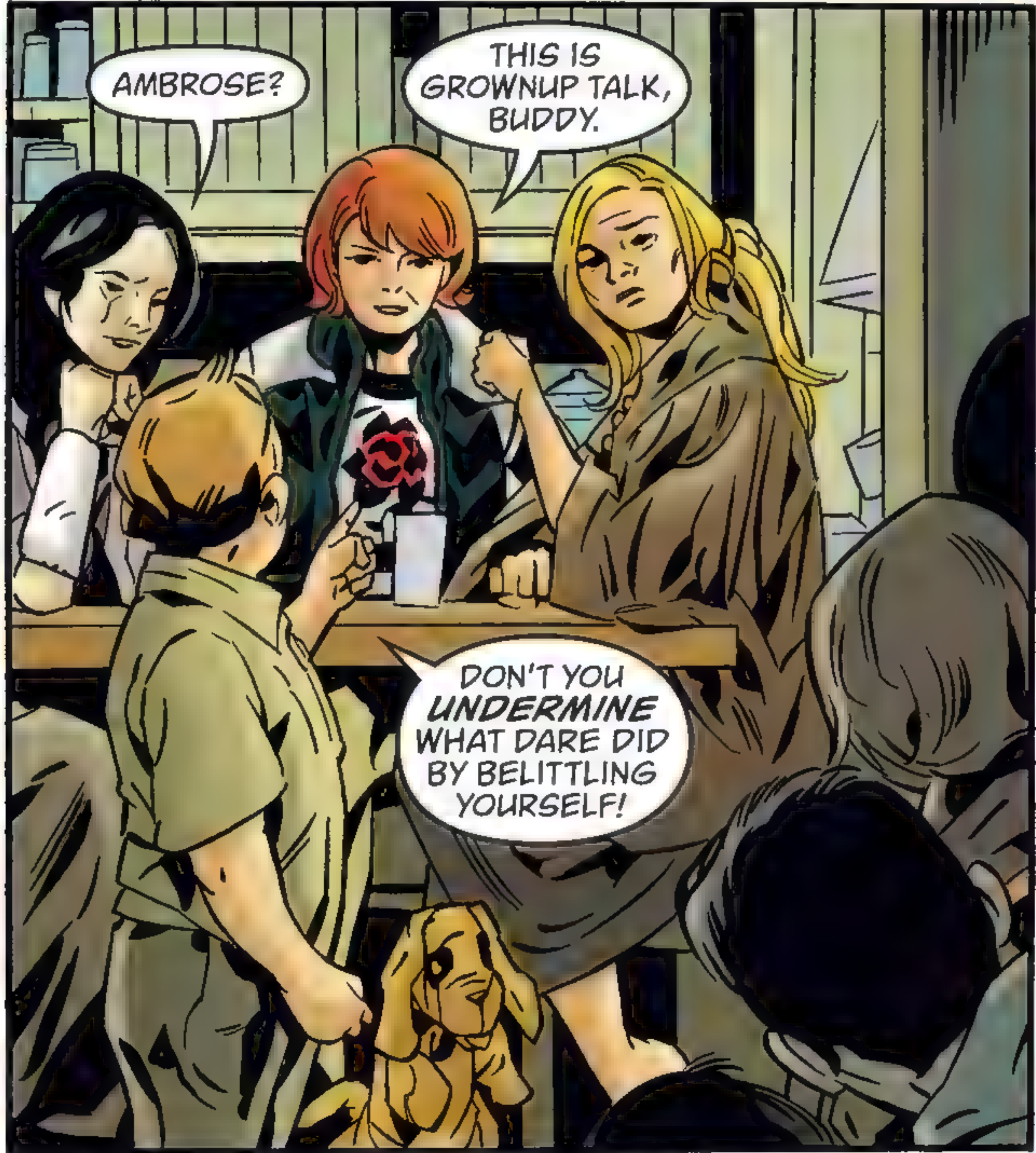


DARE DIED TO SAVE ME, EVEN THOUGH I WAS VERY MUCH NOT WORTH SAVING.



STUPID ROMANTIC NOTIONS HE HAD.

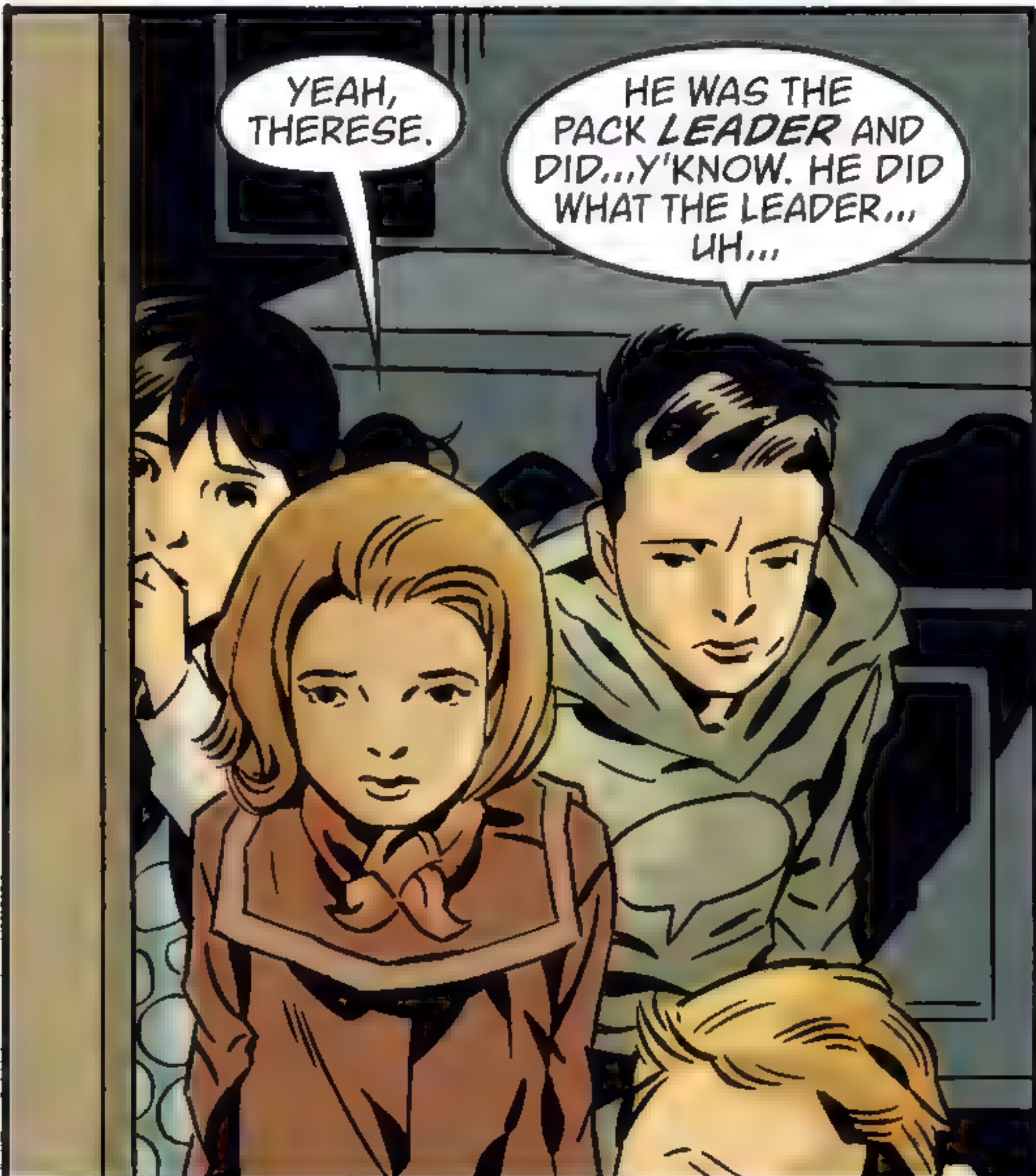
DON'T YOU DO THAT!



AMBROSE?

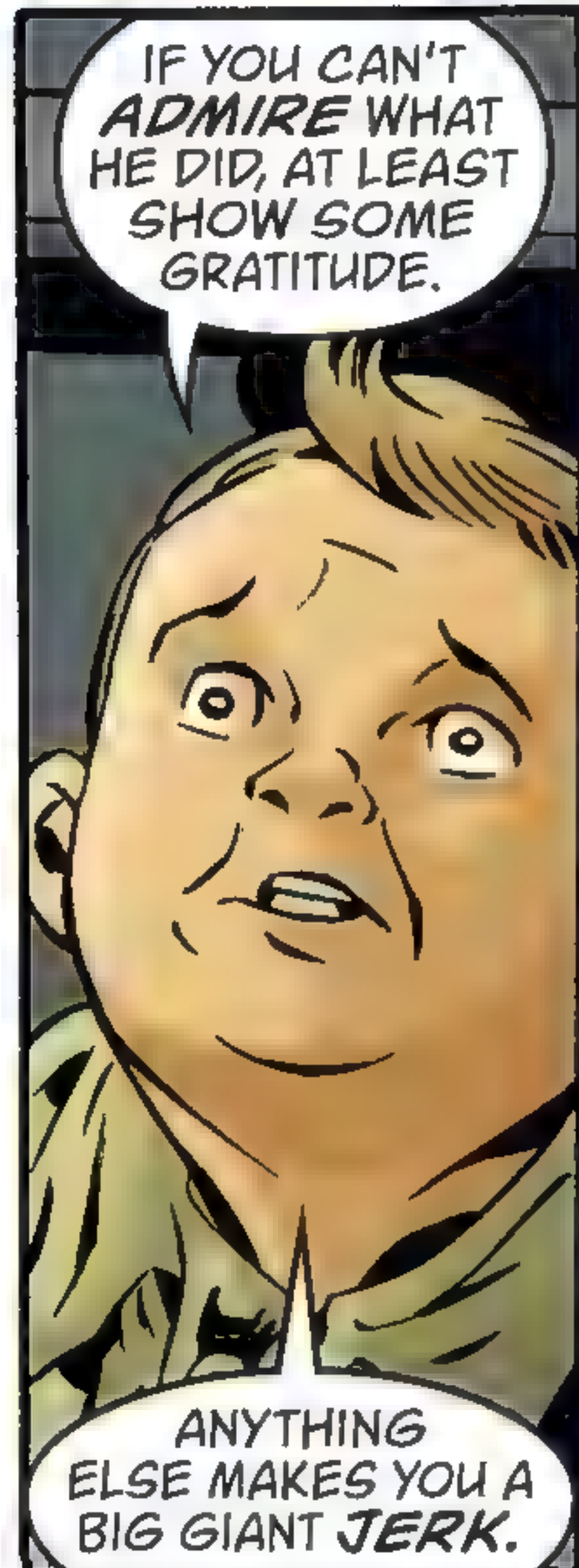
THIS IS GROWNUP TALK, BUDDY.

DON'T YOU UNDERMINE WHAT DARE DID BY BELITTLING YOURSELF!



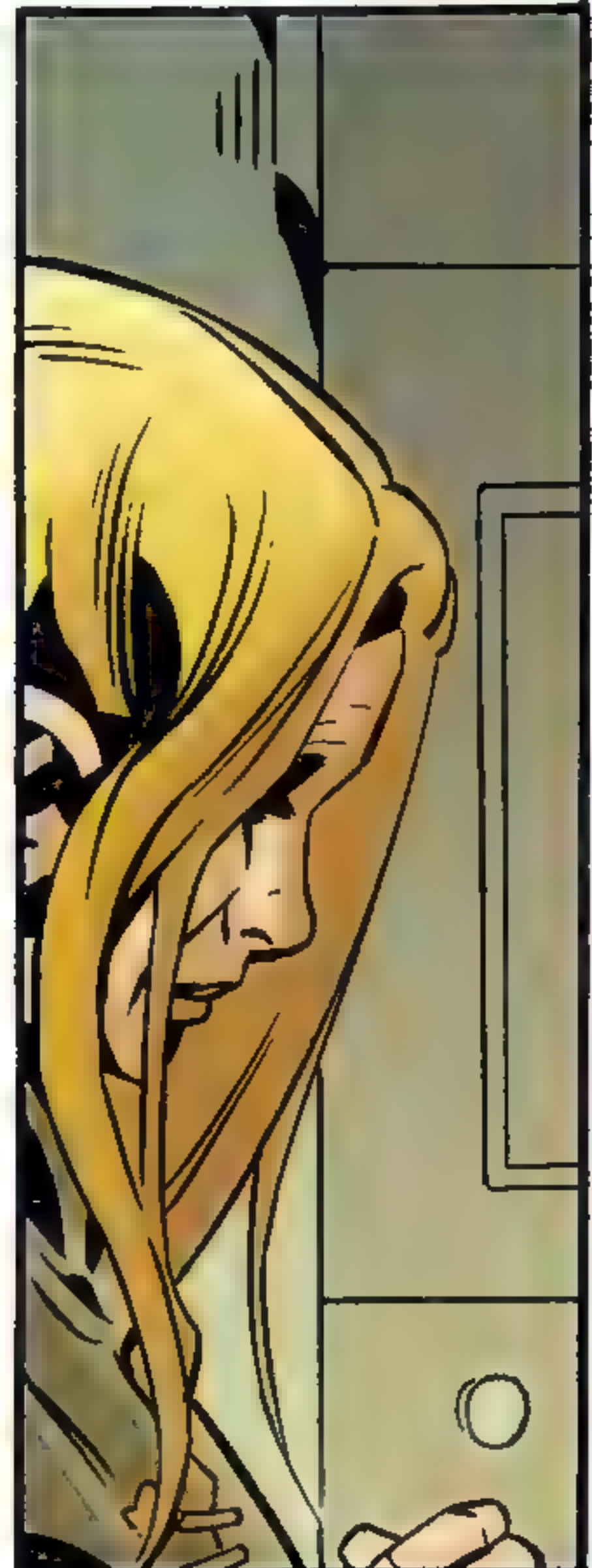
YEAH, THERESE.

HE WAS THE PACK LEADER AND DID...Y'KNOW. HE DID WHAT THE LEADER... UH...



IF YOU CAN'T ADMIRE WHAT HE DID, AT LEAST SHOW SOME GRATITUDE.

ANYTHING ELSE MAKES YOU A BIG GIANT JERK.





THIS IS CERTAINLY  
REMARKABLE.

IN FACT,  
ONE COULD AGREE  
IT'S **EXTRAOR-  
DINARY.**

HE DOESN'T  
HAVE A HEART.

NOT JUST  
ABSENT. IT'S  
**MISSING.**

BUT THE  
CAVITY IS STILL  
THERE, WHERE IT  
USED TO BE.

YOU CAN  
SEE WHERE THE  
VEINS, ARTERIES, AND  
**OTHER CONNECTIVE  
TISSUE HAS BEEN TIED  
OFF, OR CAPPED  
WITH...**

...LOOKS  
LIKE **BRASS  
FITTINGS.**

DOCTOR!

**ELABORATELY ENGRAVED.**  
THESE WERE NOT DESIGNED TO  
BE MERELY FUNCTIONAL.

**DOCTOR!!**







DAMMIT!

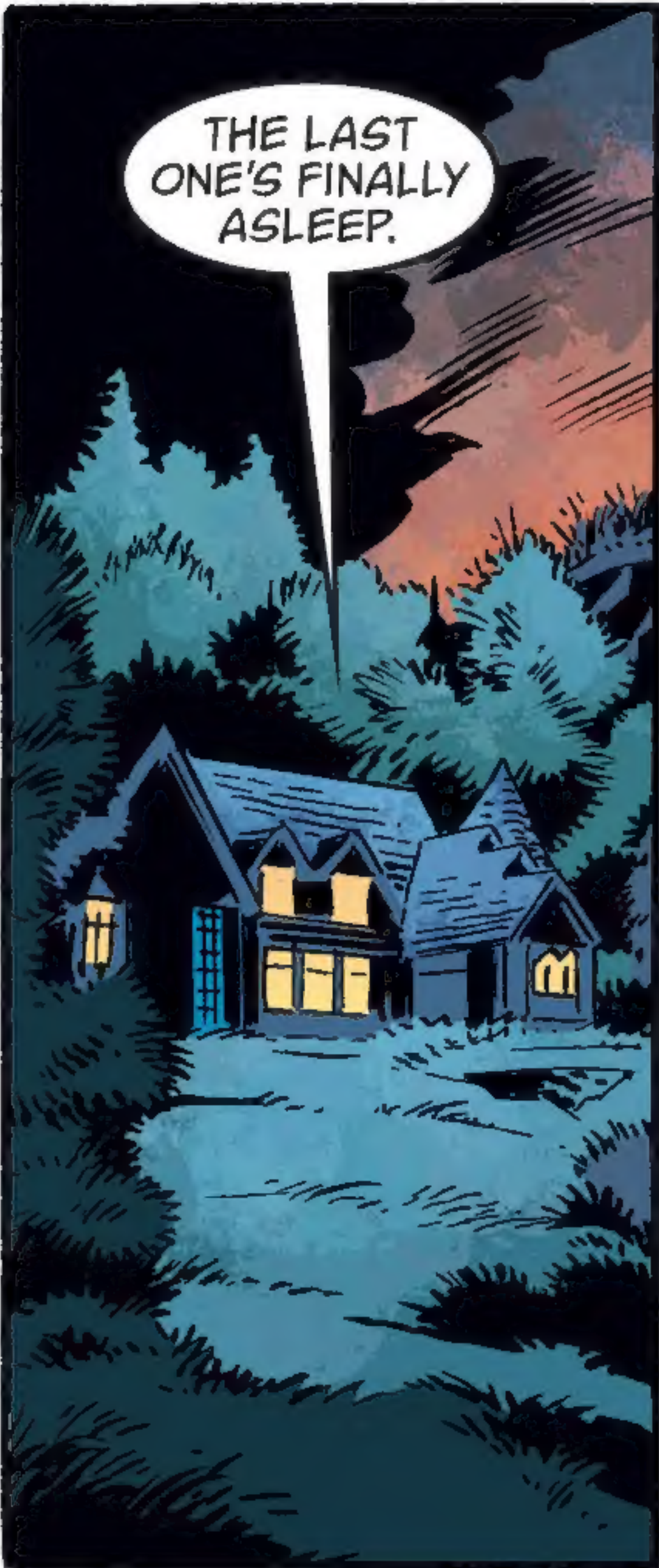
WHY'D YOU HAVE TO RUSH TO CUT ME OPEN?

IT'S ALWAYS THE MEDICAL MEN WHO CAN'T LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE.

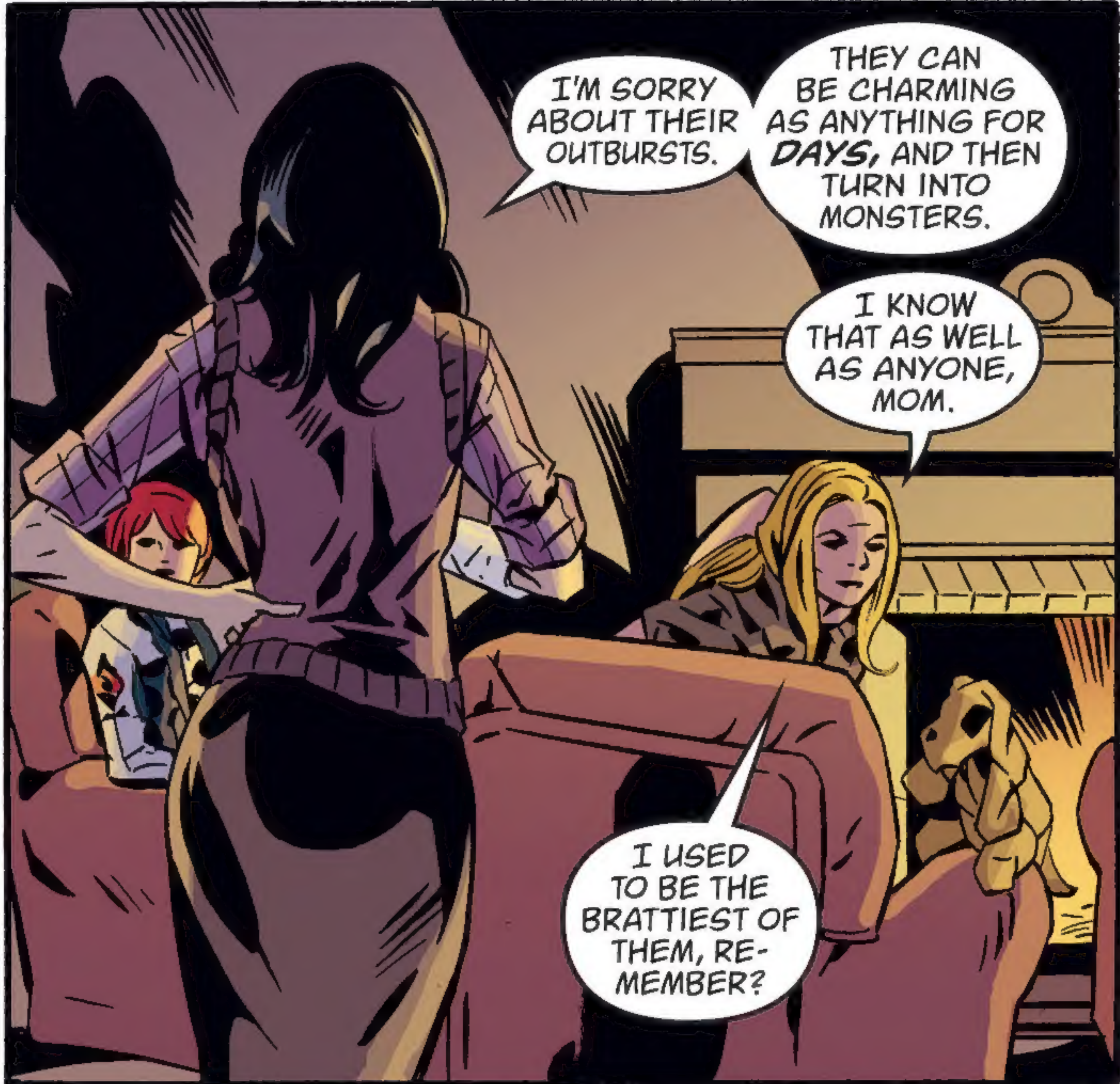
SEW ME BACK UP, WILL YOU?

QUICKLY NOW, WHILE THERE'S STILL TIME--BEFORE I GET VISIBLE SCARS.





THE LAST ONE'S FINALLY ASLEEP.

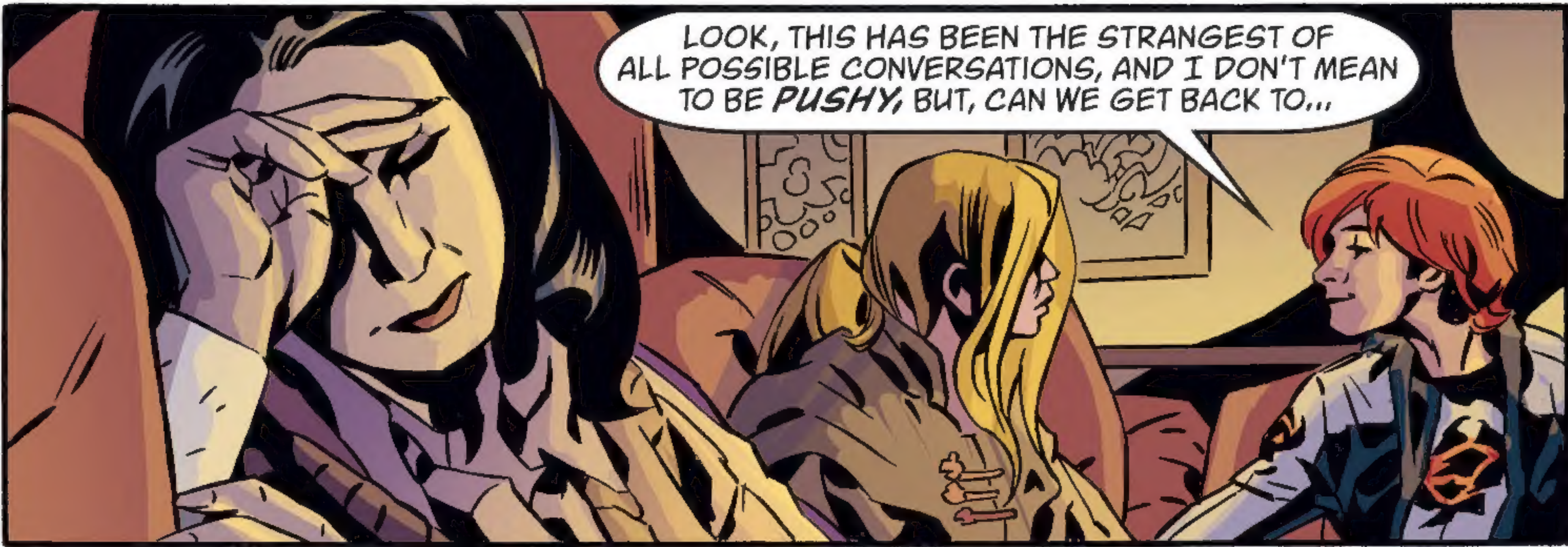


I'M SORRY ABOUT THEIR OUTBURSTS.

THEY CAN BE CHARMING AS ANYTHING FOR *DAYS*, AND THEN TURN INTO MONSTERS.

I KNOW THAT AS WELL AS ANYONE, MOM.

I USED TO BE THE BRATTIEST OF THEM, REMEMBER?




LOOK, THIS HAS BEEN THE STRANGEST OF ALL POSSIBLE CONVERSATIONS, AND I DON'T MEAN TO BE *PUSHY*, BUT, CAN WE GET BACK TO...



BEFORE WE PAUSED TO LOCK THE *HELLIONS* AWAY, YOU SAID SOMETHING ABOUT SENDING YOUR TOYS--

MY SUBJECTS.

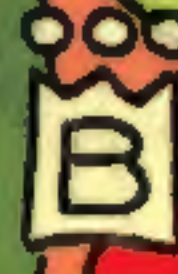
YEAH, FINE. YOUR *SUBJECTS*. YOU SEND THEM OUT TO SAVE KIDS FROM DYING.



YES, AS THE PRICE OF RESTORING THEM TO THEIR LIKE-NEW CONDITION.

NO LONGER CORRUPTED BY WHAT THEY'D DONE.

UNBLEMISHED.



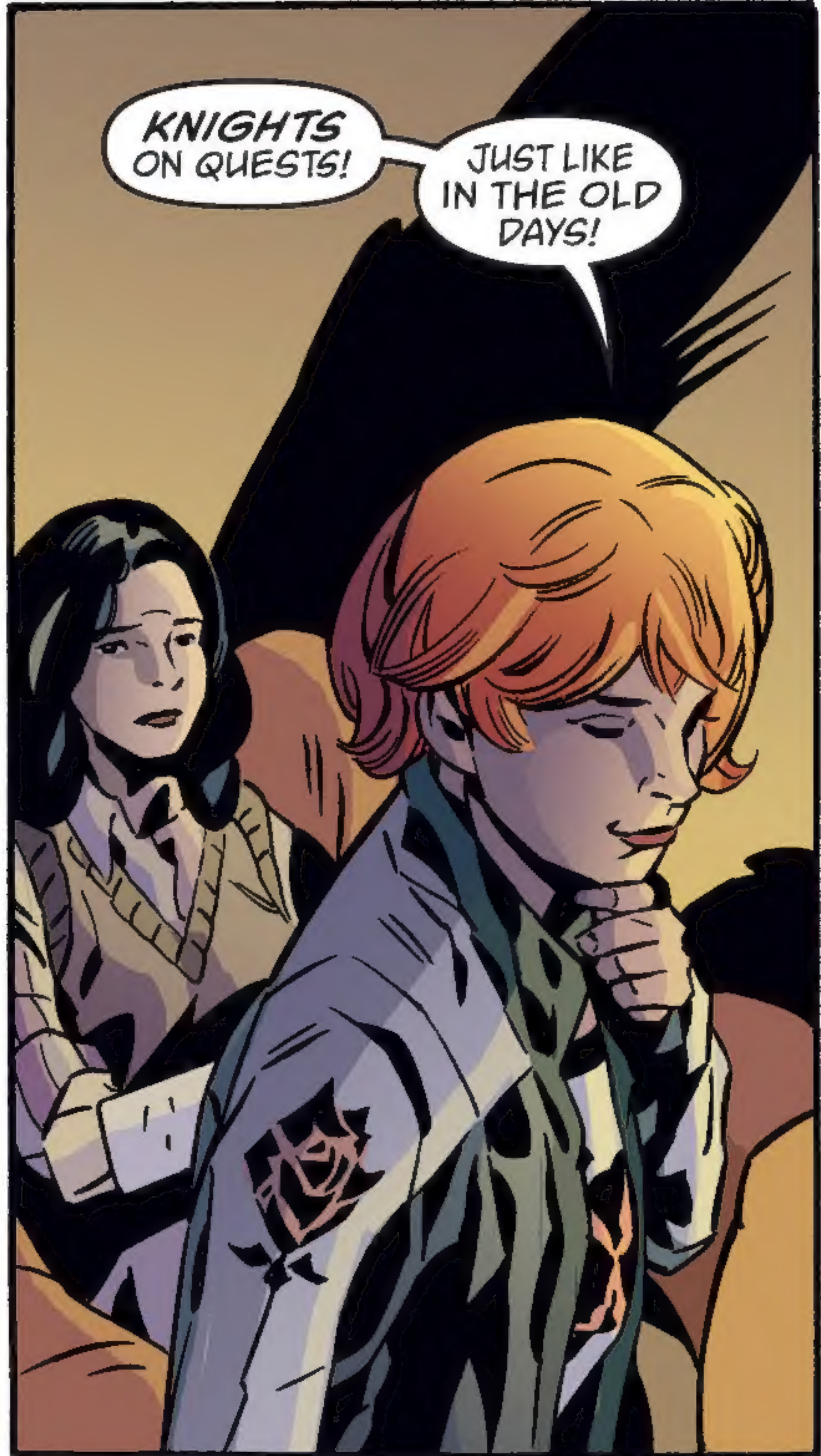




REDEMPITIVE QUESTS.

NO.

BETTER THAN THAT.



KNIGHTS ON QUESTS!

JUST LIKE IN THE OLD DAYS!



CAMELOT!



ROSE RED, WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

I KNEW WHAT I WANTED TO DO--THE KIND OF HOPE I WANTED TO BE--THE HOPE OF A SECOND CHANCE, RIGHT?

BUT I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO GO ABOUT IT.



DON'T YOU SEE? IF I TRIED TO DO IT ALL MYSELF, I'D JUST FUCK IT UP--MAYBE NOT RIGHT AWAY, BUT EVENTUALLY.

BUT I DON'T HAVE TO DO IT MYSELF, DO I?

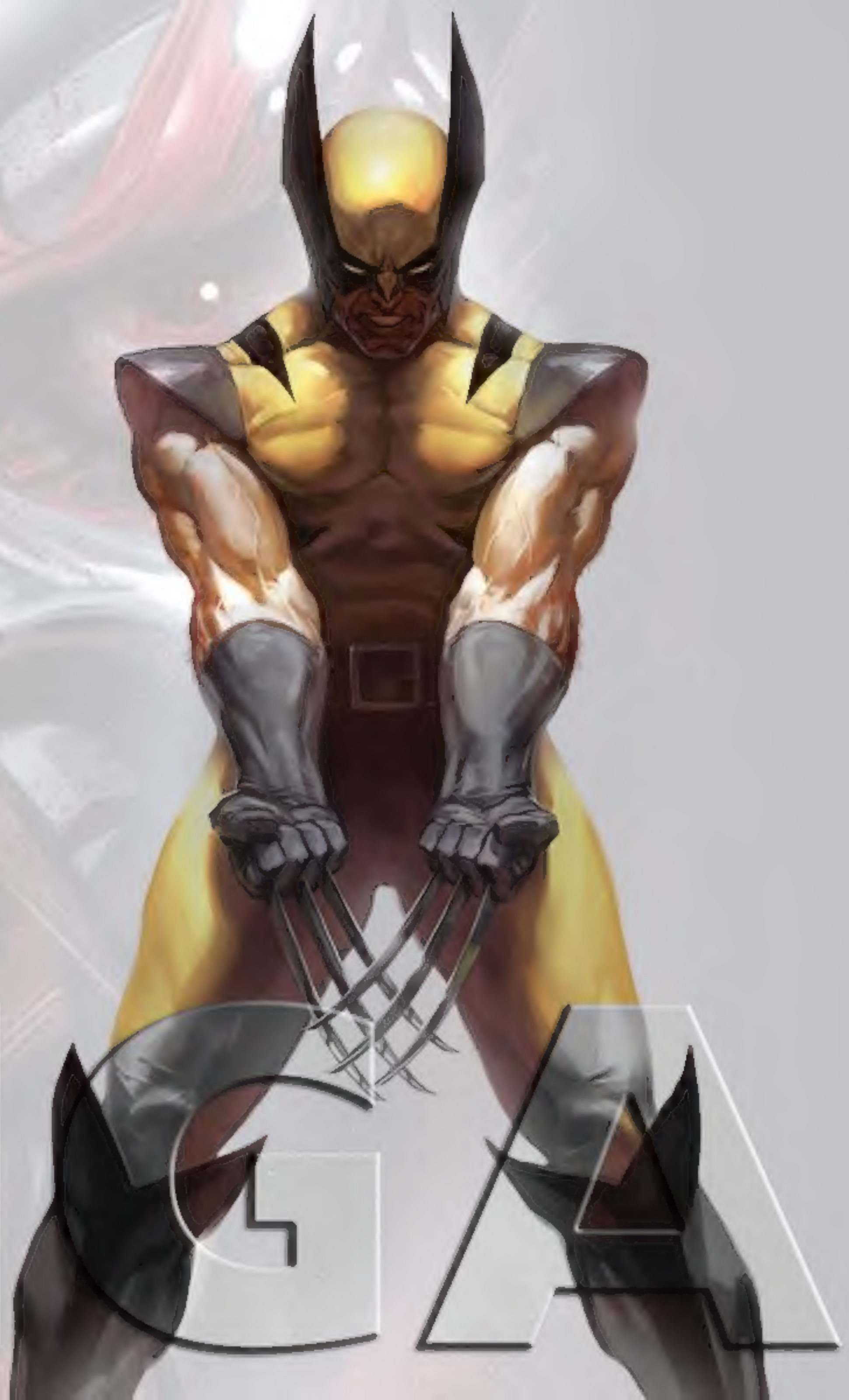






NEXT: A BRIEF SHINING MOMENT.





NATHAN